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THE WOMEN WE MARRY

ARTHUR STANWOOD PIER

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THE WOMEN WE MARRY.
THE JESTER OF ST. TIMOTHY'S. Illustrated.
THE CRASHAW BROTHERS. Illustrated.
THE NEW BOY. Illustrated.
HARDING OF ST. TIMOTHY'S. Illustrated.
THE ANCIENT GRUDGE.
THE YOUNG IN HEART.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

THE WOMEN WE MARRY

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WOMEN WE MARRY

BY

ARTHUR STANWOOD PIER

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1914

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To

MY WIFE

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THE WOMEN WE MARRY

THE WOMEN WE MARRY

CHAPTER I

BEFORE BREAKFAST

IN the summer of 1899 George Brandon set out for home after six months of wandering and collecting in the interior of Brazil. He felt an impatience to arrive greater than any zest with which he had ever embarked upon an expedition. It hurried him through the jungle and over the mountains; it urged him to pace the deck restlessly after he took the steamer at Colon; it warded sleep from his eyes during the night trip from New York to Boston.

On a warm morning in July he drove through the streets of the Back Bay. The barred doors and windows, the blank pavements offered no welcome to the returned traveler. But he looked on them with a kindly eye; these were the streets that Rosamond had been accustomed to tread; Manchester, where she now must be, was only an hour away; in a few minutes, perhaps, he should be talking with her by telephone. He looked at his watch — half-past seven; he had forgotten for the moment at what an early hour the midnight train was accustomed to deposit one in Boston. He should have to wait until nine before telephoning; his impatience culminated at the thought, and he drummed hard on one of his precious small wooden boxes.

The recollection of similar returns, made in hope and crowned with failure, did not abate the present buoyancy of his heart. His former excursions had never possessed the ultimate and decisive quality of this.

Never had he undertaken one of his journeys without feeling that Rosamond had driven him to it. Before starting out he had always tried to make her realize her responsibility. In his state of mind, to live in the same city with her was unsettling to his faculties; and after a protracted period during which attack and repulse, attack and repulse succeeded each other with unfailing regularity, he had felt obliged to deliver an ultimatum. Unless she yielded to his appeals, he should have to withdraw himself to the uttermost parts of the earth and catch butterflies. The pursuit of lepidoptera, from being a hobby, had attained the dignity of a scientific interest, and could be made to furnish the solace and excitement of adventure. "I can't go on spending my life in futile entreaties," he had said severely.

With the inexhaustible iteration of the lover, George had four times thus shamelessly achieved pathos in her eyes. She was a believing soul, and her heart was wrung at the evidence of the desperation to which she was driving a man. She had shown her emotion, and therefore George had dared to leave her, in spite of the several other contending suitors for her hand. But with all her display of emotion, she had remained stubborn, and so during his preceding absences he had kept himself before her by frequent letters.

As the results had been negligible, he had decided that this was a blunder in tactics, that he had caused her to

feel too sure of him. So on taking his leave of her for this last and longest expedition, although he had observed with gratification that her part in the fell business was occasioning her even more distress than usual, he had resolved to be extraordinarily inexorable. He suspected that in his absence she subsisted for her happiness largely upon his letters, and that the beneficial influence of separation was nullified by the warmth of his correspondence. During this last expedition he had written her not one letter.

He had a premonition that this policy would prove successful. She had no doubt come to feel that she had lost him; in the unexpected rapture of having him return she would probably grasp the fact that he was indispensable to her happiness.

She did not know that he was in this part of the world; how startled, possibly even ecstatic, she would be at hearing his voice!

In his rooms he found an accumulation of mail. He looked through it to see if there was anything of an interesting appearance, and found a letter from Rosamond. Standing by the window, he opened it.

"Dear George," he read. "I don't know that this letter will ever reach you, but I must send you the news if I can. I am engaged to be married to Graham Rappallo. Do be always my good friend. Somehow I feel that I have dropped out of your life and that in my happiness I shall not make you unhappy.

"Ever your sincere friend,

"Rosamond Ramsay."

George folded the letter slowly and replaced it in the envelope. He had come into the room a few minutes before, alert, eager, brimming with confidence and vitality; now with the slow uncertainty of one dazed and stunned, he sank into a chair. His mind refused to grapple with this monstrous announcement; slowly he drew the note again from the envelope, slowly he again read it, and then he let it slip from his fingers to the floor. He felt dazed, inert, stricken. Thought came to him by degrees and shot pangs into every corner of his consciousness. The thousand little dreams that he had dreamed could never be. The little plans that he had laid for freshly recommending himself to Rosamond were overturned. Even this day to which he had looked forward with joyous anticipation had been transformed into a day of misery and emptiness — this day! — good God, his whole life! He was suddenly left without an object to strive for, without the luring gleam of a happiness to win. He saw himself in the mirror across the room, and the face that he had been accustomed to regard with friendly interest and to cherish with modest pride seemed now the face of one beaten and ferocious, ineffectual and lawless. The carefully brushed thick black hair and the healthy dark complexion invited his scorn. Fool to think that he had ever taken satisfaction in such vapid vanities! And fool, thrice fool, to think that Rosamond could ever have loved those heavy lips and that dogged, yes, that criminal-looking jaw! He recalled with an embittering irony the smug fancies with which he had beguiled his homeward way; how he had determined if she would be his wife to take up content-

edly the surgical work which in restlessness he had so often abandoned — take it up contentedly and plod along at it even though already outstripped by his contemporaries. The ironical memory of having debated with himself the choice of ushers for his wedding added piquancy to his sufferings, as did the memory of frequent past imaginings of himself receiving the bride at the altar, and of the look in her dear eyes.

The thought of that look, the thought that it was to be for another man, put him into a sudden fury. He brought his fist down on the table, crying aloud, "I'll fight for her, I'll fight for her!" She was only engaged; she was not yet married. He took up her letter again to look at the date; it had been written two months ago. Perhaps she was already finding that she had made a mistake; perhaps it needed only his reappearance to convince her. Hope flashed out of his darkness. He would plead with her this very day. Graham Rappallo — hope flickered more dimly. If it had been one of those whom he had known to be courting her, Tom Simcox or Clarence Milne or Stephen Foster, he would have felt almost sanguine of expelling the usurper; he had never been afraid of any of them. But Graham Rappallo must have swept down on her suddenly and as suddenly seized upon her imagination. Brilliant and bold, handsome, an athlete, with now a touch of military glory and glamour to adorn him, Graham Rappallo might easily have enthralled an impressionable girl.

George stripped off his clothes while he reflected on these unpromising considerations; he splashed for some minutes in his bath, rubbed himself down with great

vigor, and felt better. As he glanced over his well-made body, he told himself aggressively that he was as good a man as Rappallo; he wished that Rosamond would submit him and Rappallo to some sort of a gladiatorial test! It galled him to think that probably Rappallo was preferred because he had seen service in a paltry little war; he himself had dared more perils chasing butterflies than any amateur soldier in Cuba!

By the time he was dressed he had calmed himself sufficiently to realize that it was still too early for telephoning, and to examine the rest of his accumulated letters. He ripped through them, finding nothing to arrest his attention until he opened what was obviously a wedding invitation. He glanced at it and let it fall to the floor. Then he sat down upon the sofa and leaned his head back against the wall and turned his face up towards the ceiling.

Mr. and Mrs. Rudolph Ramsay were inviting him to attend the wedding of their daughter Rosamond to Mr. Graham Rappallo.

George at last rose, and without picking up either note or invitation crossed the room and rang a bell. Presently the valet who looked after the comfort of the young men in the Mortimer Apartments appeared; George ordered breakfast. While he waited for it he smoked three cigarettes, pacing back and forth and eyeing gloomily the sheet of paper that he had dropped. At last he caught it up and glanced at the date, which he had not noticed. The wedding was to take place that very afternoon, at Manchester.

"Good God!" exclaimed George aloud to himself,

"how many shocks can a man endure on an empty stomach! Where the devil is my breakfast!"

He lighted a fourth cigarette; he was singeing his mustache on the stub when the breakfast appeared. "Walter," he said to the valet, "please have a blue suit pressed for me this morning. I shall want it at twelve o'clock."

"Yes, sir," said the valet, who was gray-haired and impeccably English. "Pleasant morning we're having, sir. Pleasant to see you home again, sir."

"Thanks," said George. "Boston 's the deuce of a place in July."

"A bit dead, but I suppose no warmer than Brazil, sir?"

"Yes, it was hot there," George admitted. "But I prefer the kind of butterflies they have in Brazil." He spoke with violence.

"Did you bring home some fine specimens, sir?"

"Pretty good. When I get my cases unpacked, you may see them."

"Thank you, sir; it's always a pleasure."

The valet withdrew. When in the course of an hour he returned to remove the breakfast things, George was kneeling on the floor; with hammer and chisel he was prying the cover off a small wooden box. Other boxes, already open, were on the floor beside him; the contents were still unrevealed, protected by paraffine paper.

George glanced up and caught the look of expectant interest in the man's eyes. "Here," he said, "I'm going to open this one now."

He placed the box on the table and carefully lifted the

sheet of paraffine paper. The valet bent over with eyes shining and gave a low, respectful exclamation of delight. A great purple and gold butterfly with a spread of wings of nearly ten inches was the sole occupant of the box — the largest, most magnificent butterfly that Walter had ever seen.

"We'll look at it in the light," said George, and he carried the box to the window. The valet looked over his shoulder and gazed with an admiration too deep for speech. In the sunlight, the still and shining thing seemed too beautiful to be dead. Its rich purple was iridescent now; veins of gold ran irregularly out from thorax to wing-tip; and ruby and amethystine lights showed, yet seemed half-hidden in the iridescence. At the base of the wings two heart-shaped flecks of scarlet gave a bleeding, human, touching significance to the brilliancy of the thing.

"It's beautiful; what is it called, sir?" asked the valet.

"It's a new species — unknown to me, at least," replied George. "I named it *Imperatrix R.*"

"It's beautiful," repeated the valet.

George looked at the man's absorbed face and fascinated eyes.

"And she never looked at any of my specimens with such eyes!" he thought bitterly.

CHAPTER II

THE AGGRIEVED BACHELORS

GEORGE BRANDON'S rooms were on the top floor of an apartment house facing Boston Common. From his front windows he could look over the elms of the Common to the shops and office buildings of Boylston Street, and over the maples and alien trees of the Public Garden to the suave line of Arlington Street — the frontier of the Back Bay. Arlington Street Church and the tower of Trinity and the spire of the New Old South were all within his vision, rising from the distant mass of huddled roofs. The corner on which the apartment house stood was one where two distinct lines of the city's life intersected each other, the noisy trolley cars and rattling drays of Charles Street, and the sleek soft-rolling carriages of Beacon.

From his side windows George viewed the roofs marching up Beacon Hill to culminate in the State House dome at the apex — roofs, chimneys, and chimney-pots, beginning below him and rising in the distance. Pigeons were always strutting and love-making on these roofs; often they flew up to rest on George's window sills. He had encouraged them in the past by putting crumbs out for them; he liked to see them at close range and study their colors. The bright colors of birds and butterflies had a never-ending fascination for him.

When George had first taken these rooms, he had de-

signed to devote himself to the practice of medicine, and he had furnished them with a view to the needs of a young physician. His living-room — the room fronting on the Common — was also to be a waiting-room for patients. The room behind it was to be his office. But as time went by and George still waited for patients instead of keeping patients waiting for him, and as his expeditions and the collections resulting therefrom made more demands upon his time and space, the character of the apartment was altered.

The austere, unfriendly furnishings of the doctor's waiting-room had given place to objects of more individuality and warmth — two ancient high-backed English chairs with gilded carvings, a Chinese inlaid table, supporting an old bronze Chinese lamp, and a side table on which were decanters, containing liquids of hospitable hue.

When Hetty Mallory, George's sister, first surveyed the transformed apartment, she exclaimed crudely, "George dear! this does n't look like business."

George shrugged his shoulders. "It does well enough for a *bon vivant*."

"The complete bachelor according to Ouida," observed Hetty disparagingly. "I suppose you have dumb bells under your bed, and chest weights in your bathroom, and a punching-bag to exercise on when you're in your pajamas!"

"Not at all; here you see the man of science." George took his sister into the room which had once been intended to serve him as an office. But the glass operating-table had been sold, and the book-case filled with

medical lore had been removed; even George's diploma from the Medical School and the certificate from the State Board of Medical Examiners, which had hung side by side on the wall, were no longer visible. In fact there was no wall space left on which to hang anything, for a series of tall mahogany cases containing innumerable little drawers had been installed and reached almost to the ceiling.

"Butterflies!" Hetty had exclaimed, taking in at a glance the significance of these furnishings. "What an inconsequent occupation!"

George had felt hurt. But then, as Hetty was accustomed to remark, the truth almost always hurts. She had often told George that he needed first to be jacked up and then to have a fire built under him. If she could achieve the first operation, she was pretty sure that Rosamond Ramsay would perform the second.

The idea of her father's son frittering away his life was abhorrent to Hetty. Dr. George Brandon had been one of the useful men of his generation, and Hetty had inherited a belief in energy, activity, industry — and in devoting them to serve useful purposes. Her father had been one of the heroes of his profession. It was an infection derived from some dangerous laboratory experiments that had carried him off. Hetty passionately adored her father's life and the manner of his death. She could not understand how, in the memory of it, George, who had the surgeon's native skill and tastes, could so lack incentive and purpose. In a way, her attitude, which was similar to that of many older men of the profession, influenced George to move in precisely

the opposite direction from that which she desired. It seemed to him that he was constantly falling short of what people expected of him and so was being viewed with disapproval; very well; since he could not succeed in pleasing others, he might at least set about pleasing himself. The belittling attitude of his sister towards his butterflies only made him defiantly assertive of their importance. The significance of lepidoptera in his life had been artificially fostered. From having been an amiable diversion of a young man with scientific tastes, the collection and preservation of fragile winged things had gradually taken on an interest which, temporarily at least, made it a worthy occupation. To be sure, there had been times when he contrasted it with the work his father had done, and feeling its comparative unworthiness, had been discontented. But on the other hand he could not pursue one form of life unremittingly over all the globe without acquiring knowledge of other forms also. The great work of naturalists had been begun always from a relatively insignificant, even trivial, starting-point. Darwin was not above studying the jellyfish. And if to this line of argument with which George was accustomed to reassure himself, a distinction between studying and collecting was suggested, George would make the mental reply, "Not in my case."

After brooding for some time over the shattering news which had been contained in Rosamond's letter, he set about unpacking his boxes and mounting his new specimens. It was delicate work; he took the same interest in it that he might have taken in deftly performing a neat surgical operation; he was as careful in the use of

the tools. In a task requiring such minute observation and delicacy of touch, he temporarily forgot his sorrow.

It recurred to him when he had mounted and labeled the last butterfly and slid the last drawer into place.

"There," he said, aloud, "that finishes a half-year of work. And now what am I to do with myself?"

Graham Rappallo had deprived him of his expected occupation. George viewed Graham somewhat as a conscientious striker with an honest grievance looks upon an imported strike-breaker who has taken his place.

"Well," George said, after a pause, answering his own question, "I suppose for one thing I might be getting ready for the wedding."

He passed into the bedroom where the valet Walter had laid out his clothes. After he had dressed, he found that he had fifteen minutes before he needed to start for the train. He began to debate with himself whether, on the whole, he should go to the wedding.

"It will make me feel so damned badly," he said, aloud. "But then," he added, "I feel so damned badly already! I might as well see it through. And there will undoubtedly be champagne."

Thus, putting the best face possible on the matter, he told Walter to call a cab, and a few minutes later he was on his way to the North Station.

The wedding guests who waited in front of the closed gate of Track III, where the special car was being attached to the Manchester train, suddenly underwent a dramatic and pleasurable thrill, similar, no doubt, to that experienced by festive banqueters to whom an

unexpected ghost appears. "It's George Brandon," was the excited communication that ran quickly from one to another, accompanied by a sudden turning of heads and craning of necks, — which gave a fortunate few a glimpse of the young man in the arms of his sister. She, astonished girl, retained sufficient self-possession to release him as hastily as she had embraced him; public displays of a tender feeling were not at all to her mind.

"George dear, I never dreamed of laying eyes on you here," she said. "Why did n't you let us know?"

"I just got in this morning," he explained. He shook hands with his brother-in-law, and said, "Fine day for the wedding."

Hetty looked at him compassionately. "Did you hurry home because of it?"

"I knew nothing about it till I found the invitation on my arrival. How long has Rappallo been after her?"

"Sit with us in the train and I'll tell you about it," said Hetty.

The gate was opened, and the wedding guests and other passengers streamed through. Philip Mallory, who had greeted his brother-in-law with the absence of surprise characteristic of a well-poised Bostonian in surprising encounters, seated himself across the aisle from George and Hetty, and unfolded a newspaper. Hetty began at once.

"It all happened very suddenly. I think they had never even met until four months ago. He 's an impetuous person; from what I hear, he soon swept her off her feet. Of course, his having been a Rough Rider in Cuba gave him a certain picturesqueness, I suppose. She came her-

self to tell me of her engagement. She said that the first time she saw him, she had been fascinated and hoped he would fall in love with her. In fact, she was more like a child than a grown-up woman about it." Hetty glanced sharply at her brother; she hoped that without actually doing Rosamond an injustice she could still put George so out of conceit with her that his sense of suffering would be less than his sense of escape. "She talked of thrills and a beating heart when his name was announced, told how she lost her tongue in his presence, to recover it and feel that with no one had she ever been so brilliant and charming before. Yet she had thought in the end that he had been rather indifferent, and so she had gone home feeling quite unhappy. But that was unnecessary; her conquest of him was almost as rapid as his of her. She asked me," continued Hetty, "if there was any way of communicating with you. It seemed to be somewhat on her mind that she must send you the news."

"I got it in time," replied George. "I'm sorry it's Rappallo — superior and supercilious sort of fellow. If it had been any one of those that were trying along with me, I should n't have felt quite so cut up. I suppose I'm an idiot, Hetty, to admit to you that I am rather cut up."

Hetty gave him a sympathetic look and surreptitiously patted his hand.

"Well, I'm not the only one," George said, catching and holding her gloved fingers. "I wonder if Steve Foster is going to this function."

"Yes, he's on the train somewhere. I saw him as we were passing through the gate."

"I think I'll look him up," said George.

He passed on through the car, pausing here and there to have a chat with young ladies and elderly ladies — equally affable with both. "Yes, just back from the ends of the world — here to-day and gone to-morrow; yes, so fortunate to have got here just in time for this gay occasion —" Hetty caught some of his genial replies and imagined the others, as she watched his debonair progress down the aisle. Her husband glanced after him over the top of his newspaper.

"Seems to be bearing up," he remarked to Hetty.

"Would n't *you* if you felt that was what every one was saying behind your back?" she retorted, with some asperity.

He shrugged his shoulders and turned another page of the newspaper. He was really rather sorry for George, whom he liked, but he felt that George had brought this disaster on himself by being so irresponsible, and that being so irresponsible he would not take the disaster very hard. Philip Mallory, proudly conscious of the possession of a wife and two children and an obligation to contribute somewhat to their support, was disposed to regard as irresponsibly nomadic any unmarried man who was fond of travel.

In the front seat of the car George found Stephen Foster, reclining on the small of his back, his lanky legs up in the air, his chin in his hands, and his eyes looking morosely out of the window. George slipped into the seat beside him and aroused Steve by pressing his leg.

"Hello!" Foster turned and slid into a more upright

position. He was a tall, thin fellow, with oblique eyes, an inadequate nose, and a whimsical, dejected mouth. His skin was pale, his shoulders were narrow; but the twinkle in his Japanese brown eyes and the lift of the corners of his lips when he smiled gave him an engaging quality which caused people to overlook his physical defects. "The last I heard of you, you were in Brazil; bad news must travel fast."

"It did n't travel, but I ran home to hear it," replied George. "With you and the others on the job in my absence, I had no fear of a thing like this happening. How could you have been so careless?"

"Careless is not the word," replied Foster, with a bitter emphasis. "I put her in the way of falling in love with the man. If it had n't been for me, I think positively it never would have happened. You may imagine how I've been enjoying myself!"

"What fool thing did you do?"

"It seemed innocent enough. I asked her to go with me to see an exhibition of rough riding by the Troop. You know Rappallo is Captain of the Troop. He was the hero of the evening. He does ride splendidly, and he did all kinds of daring and skillful feats, showing the others how,— top man in the pyramid, vaulting two horses, and straddling a third at a gallop with never a miss, the ideal cavalryman, and damnably handsome at that; I dare say he fascinated more than half the girls in the gallery. Anyway, after about two minutes Rosamond said she could n't keep her eyes off him. A man who is six feet tall and weighs less than a hundred and thirty-five pounds should never select a rough-riding

exhibition, or any other athletic spectacle for the scene of his courting."

Foster had slid down again until his head was below the top of the seat and his thin knees were cocked up on a level with it.

"A good rule for most of those in the feather-weight class," conceded George. "But for one of your attractions, Steve, breaking it should have been a pardonable indiscretion. And so long as she did n't know Rappallo, I don't see why the thing resulted so fatally."

"There again I was the agent," said Foster. "A week later I was having supper with her at a ball when she saw Rappallo and told me to bring him up. He danced with her practically all the rest of the evening. They were engaged within a month."

"I'd rather it had been you, Steve."

"Thanks; I would n't have minded half so much if it had been you. But Rappallo — of course, he's a man of ability; I don't know him well; I dare say that's the chief trouble with him."

They were both silent for a while. "What irritates me," said Foster, "is that at this wedding, at which either of us might perfectly well have been a principal, we shall both be mere nobodies. We shall be ushered to our seats by fellows that don't know Rosamond at all; they'll be up at the front, and we shall be tucked away in the background."

"Near enough for me," asserted George gloomily.

"We shan't even be invited to the bride's table," continued Foster. "We shall just be left to hang around

outside, while the same lot of indifferent ushers are hearing her talk and getting her last smiles."

George made no comment, and Foster resumed after a pause, "Do you know what I'm going to do after it's all over? I've enlisted as a cow-puncher on a cattle steamer, sailing to-morrow."

"That's an idiotic idea. What's the point?"

"I want to work some of the soreness out of my mind and into my body. I'm disgusted anyway with the kind of ladylike life I lead here. If I'd been a Rough Rider, Rappallo might not have had such an easy time of it. I've never roughed it anywhere; now I'm going to cut loose."

"You're working your passage over, are you? What will you do then?"

"I have n't thought. I shall probably feel entitled then to some amusement."

George laughed. "You'll do better to take passage in the first cabin."

"No, this is a great moral experience that I'm about to undergo. You'd better share it with me. Though, of course, you don't need it; you've had adventure enough."

"It seems a crime to let you do such a thing alone; some one ought to go along to look after you," said George.

"Be the man. We'll have a great time in Europe. I refuse to let this disappointment ruin my life."

"I may as well let it ruin mine; I'll go with you."

Foster again slid almost upright in his amazement. He slapped George's leg and cried, "Fine for you! There's an old shark on Atlantic Avenue; you have to pay him

ten dollars, and he'll find you a berth. I'll take you to him when we go back this afternoon. You're a good sport, George."

"It's the amusement that appeals to me, and not the adventure," George replied.

The two young men, laughing together, talking with animation, did not present a very satisfactory appearance to the few gossipy observers in the car, who would have had them pale, dejected, silent, betraying their blighted condition in every glance and gesture. Yet when they left the train at Manchester and took their seats in one of the barges that were to carry the guests to the church, there was a sudden sobering of George's mood. He was about to look upon the girl Rosamond for the last time. Hereafter she would be a creature altered, absorbed, remote, never any more to be the companion spirit of his imagination, the very impulse of his dreams.

Before a rustic little wooden church the barge drew up. George Brandon and Steve Foster, though they had been sitting together, here chose to separate. George loitered a moment on the path; the white rail fence in the shadow of the row of maple trees, the dusty road climbing the hill and dotted with gay equipages, and in the near foreground a young woman in white leading a small bare-legged child made a picture that afterwards recurred irrelevantly whenever he thought of that day.

The organ was playing softly as he entered the church, and there was the airy fragrance of summer flowers in the bright interior. The sunlight streamed through the stained-glass windows upon the masses of clematis and

golden glow framing the chancel, gleamed on the golden cross above the altar and the golden eagle on the pulpit, and enriched the rows of brightly dressed, expectant ladies. George Brandon declined the offer of an usher to lead him up the aisle, and seated himself in one of the rear pews.

Presently the quiet rustle and bustle of people passing to their seats entirely ceased; the organist began a more solemn and commanding strain, the hush of the congregation but half disguised the lurking excitement. The clergyman in his robes appeared in the chancel; Graham Rappallo, tall, dark, unsmiling, stepped from the vestry room; the wedding march pealed forth; and the congregation rose.

George, standing next to the aisle, turned his head. The procession of ushers slowly passed, disclosing the bride and her father. The veil was drawn back from her face; George met her eyes. There was a sudden startled rush of color to her cheeks, which had been pale. Then, clinging to her father's arm, and gazing straight down the long aisle at the end of which stood the man who was to be her husband, she passed, the filmy lace of her veil brushing George's sleeve.

CHAPTER III

A VERY WELL-BEHAVED YOUNG MAN

ON the broad veranda overlooking the sea Rosamond and her husband received the wedding guests. George Brandon, moving slowly with the stream, had glimpses of the pair as they stood with their backs against the screen of clematis; more than ever before were his eyes allured by Rosamond's face. She was no longer pale; the radiance of an attained happiness gave brilliancy to her color and to her glance. She was a fair creature— to George the very personification of all that was bright, sunny, and kind, her tall stateliness surmounted by a face of no handsome coldness, but eager and engaging. The husband at her side stood with a martial rigor, accepting congratulations rather than offering himself to them with enthusiasm; to George it was a matter of amazement that he could exhibit so little emotion; it caused George to feel guiltily conscious of his own lack of self-control.

"Oh, Dr. Brandon!" said a soft voice, and George turned to behold Ruth, Rosamond's younger sister, smiling and eager as the bride. He had always thought of Ruth as a mere child, but she had now, to fill the place of maid of honor, blossomed forth as a young lady, to her obvious delight. "You are n't noticing your grown-up little friend, Dr. Brandon," she said, giving him her hand.

"So I was n't," he admitted. "And I'm very glad to have my attention called to her. What a pretty hat!"

"Oh, do you think so!" She exhibited both sides and the back of it, flattered by such interest. "Rosamond picked it out for me. You don't know what a thing it is to have your first feather." She cast a complacent upward eye at the soft blue plume that overhung her hat-brim. "Have you just come home, Dr. Brandon?"

"Only this morning."

"Is South America very exciting, full of snakes and jungles and jaguars?"

"Well, yes, in some places."

"We were afraid you might be lost, or hurt, or something."

"Really? Why?"

Ruth blushed suddenly, and then felt she had betrayed herself. She floundered. "Not hearing from you — Rosamond, at least — she spoke of it at first — only at first, that is; of course, after a while she heard from your sister that you had written and were all right."

"Was Rosamond expecting to hear from me?" He felt it was hardly a fair question, but a morbid desire pressed him on.

"Yes, I think so. At least —" Ruth paused, evidently in doubt as to how much she ought to disclose, and then yielded to the frankness of youth. "I know this much; when she went up to Canada on a visit, she told me to be sure to forward to her at once any letters from South America. You know —" Ruth shyly looked at him and then betrayed her own state of mind by exclaiming, "Oh, why did n't you write?"

George shook hands with her, and subsided again into the current that was moving towards the bride and groom.

What a capacity he had for blundering! With his quick imagination, which was always friendly to his own hopes and interests, he reconstructed the processes of Rosamond's mind. She had been fascinated by Rappallo and yet perhaps waited wistfully for the word that might brace her soul in its wavering and weakness. And he had not sent it to her aid! So at last the warrior's compulsion had overridden the sound protest of her heart and brain; she had surrendered to the dominion of eye and blood. The blush that had streamed over her face when she had passed George in the church was corroborative evidence. George was able even to feel pity for her in what must have been the catastrophe of discovering him in the congregation. He felt that now, in approaching her and her husband for the congratulatory word, he was preparing for her an ordeal — though to be sure, she would now have herself in hand.

His inferences afforded him a measure of melancholy gratification, and exalted him spiritually above the low level of Steve Foster, whom he had observed drinking the sparkling waters of Lethe in the white marquee which adorned an edge of the lawn. Small tables were set out on the grass, and the guests were disposing themselves at these, but Foster and several other young men preferred to make their libations at the shrine itself. George, catching glimpses now of these young men, and now of the smiling bride and her self-contained husband, felt that the matter was too tragic for champagne.

He was progressing more rapidly, the bride and groom seemed to be dealing with their guests at an accelerated speed. A panic suddenly overcame him; he had nothing to say, and he must not betray any emotion! For his own sake, for Rosamond's.

He smoothed down his coat, gave a nervous twist to his mustache — and then Rosamond was before him.

"George!" she cried, and she did not release his hand. "I could n't believe it was you! When did you get home? Were n't you nice to come! Oh, I'm crazy to know all about it!"

She was keeping a stiff enough upper lip. For all his resolve, it was more than he could do; his own lip twitched in an uncontrollable tremor. He found himself passing on, speechless, to Rosamond's husband. There was staunchness in Rappallo's grasp of his hand, there was honesty and kindliness in the look of Rappallo's gray eyes, but they did n't help; George failed to achieve utterance, and with a sensation of having crowned a career of failure with an episode of shame, he fled to the white marquee. Instead, at the last moment, of having made her feel sorry for herself, he had merely made her feel sorry for him. His sense of significance which had been so exalting had vanished, and with it his dignified superiority to the ministrations of champagne. Steve Foster filled a glass for him and one for himself, performing the operation with a noticeable gravity; with an even greater gravity he touched his glass to George's.

"Her health," he said, and after tossing off the bumper he was sufficiently maudlin to add, "God bless her!"

The spectacle of this deranged sentimentalist enabled George to right himself. "You're laying a foundation for seasickness," he observed.

"My dear old fuss-budget, if you'll only lace yourself well with champagne, you won't know what seasickness is," declared Foster cheerfully.

"That may be true if the voyage is short enough. But you're going on a cattle steamer. Besides, you've got to remember that you're to take me to that booking-agent when we get back to Boston this afternoon."

"Oh, that's all right. He's a friend of mine; he'll do anything I say."

"If we start now, we can get a train ahead of this crowd. That will give me plenty of time to see the agent, do my packing, and make all my arrangements."

"Leave now!" Foster was aghast at the idea. "My dear fellow, I've just begun to enjoy myself. So far" — he remembered to add — "as it's possible to enjoy one's self on an essentially sad occasion. Come, George, join me and let us drown our woes in wine."

George felt that his responsibility for Foster had already begun. "Look here, Steve," he said pleadingly, "if I'm to go with you to-morrow, I have little enough time to make all my arrangements. Won't you give up an hour of this for the sake of helping me get started right — as long as I'm going over with you?"

An appeal to Foster's generosity always had him at a disadvantage.

"All right," he said tractably. "Only let's have one more drink before we start."

"Just one."

Again with solemnity Foster filled the glasses. "To you know whom," he said, and he drank with the air of one performing an act of reverence. Then he suffered George to lead him away from the white marquee; they passed along the edge of the lawn on which now sat jolly little luncheon parties, and approached the house just as Rosamond and her husband were descending the veranda steps. The sun shone on the ringlets of Rosamond's hair, translating its dark brown hue to a soft bronze; as she passed she glanced at Foster and at George with a questioning look and smile. George interpreted it: "I am so happy to-day; please won't you be happy too?"

In the train to Boston, Foster slumbered and left George free to look out of the window and dream. That sunlight on her hair — bringing out the red gold in it and, when one was close enough to see, revealing a myriad little rainbow lights — he had first noticed it one afternoon when they sat together in a canoe far up the Charles River. It was the afternoon when he had first told her that he loved her. Never, so long as he lived, could he escape from the allurement of her eyes and of those soft and brilliant lights in her hair.

As the train entered the North Station, Foster awoke and bewailed his frightful thirst. George would not permit him to allay it until after the business with the agent on Atlantic Avenue had been transacted. This having been accomplished and George having parted with ten dollars, for the privilege of feeding and watering cattle for the next twelve days, he hailed a cab, and

yielding to Foster's entreaties and demands, deposited him at his club.

He himself continued on to his lodgings, where he soon had the incurious Walter deeply involved in his preparations for departure.

CHAPTER IV

A RESCUE AT SEA

THE Catalonia was to sail at nine o'clock in the morning; according to instructions George presented himself on the dock at half-past six. Neither Foster nor the cattle had yet appeared; two green-looking Irishmen returning for a visit to the old country and two recent graduates from Dartmouth College were waiting to present credentials similar to his own. The cattle foreman, a big, red-faced, red-haired man, with small eyes and a brutal mouth, led them all to a room with bunks built on each side and a table and benches in the middle. He said, "Stow your duds, and don't spend no time in prinking."

Presently the cattle came trampling aboard, bawling, bellowing, darkening the already dark interior, filling the place with the rancid odor of over-heated, steaming animals. When they had been made fast to their stanchions and watered, it was within ten minutes of the time of sailing, and Steve Foster had not yet appeared. George felt angry with him and at the same time relieved. The expedition was a foolish one, and it was rather fortunate that Steve had escaped it by getting drunk. George at once decided not to persevere in an adventure which could only be unprofitable and on which he had embarked mainly through amiable willingness to be of service to a disconsolate and incom-

petent friend. He therefore slipped into the bunkroom, hastily gathered up his clothes and crammed them into his bag, put on his hat, and started for the gangway.

The foreman was guarding it and confronted him. "You're a quitter, are you?" said the foreman. "Well, nobody quits that once gets aboard."

"I've changed my mind about sailing," replied George. "Call it quitting if you like."

He endeavored to push by the foreman. The next instant the impact of a powerful fist on the point of his jaw stretched him senseless.

The two Dartmouth graduates who had been watching the proceedings ran forward. The foreman, smoking his pipe, regarded them with amusement.

"Haul him away and bring him to," he ordered. "And don't no more of you get rambunctious."

One of the men brought a bucket of water while the other fanned George's face with his hat. The foreman smoked unconcernedly during the process of revival. After a few moments George regained a dazed consciousness and was led into the bunkroom. He sat on the edge of his berth holding his aching head in his hands, and awoke by degrees to an understanding of his injury. He deliberated upon it, and the more he deliberated the more intolerable it seemed; he got to his feet, and the fact that he felt weak and unsteady on them only inflamed his resolution. The quality of it must have shown in his face, for one of the young men, Sidney Hanford by name, plucked him by the arm and said anxiously, "What are you going to do?"

"I'm going ashore," said George, "and if that fellow tries to stop me, I'll kill him."

"You can't go ashore," explained Hanford. "We're moving."

It was true; the ship had cast off while George was lying unconscious, and now the throb of her engines communicated itself to his dulled senses.

He seated himself again on the edge of his bunk and again took his head in his hands. "You'd better lie down for a while," advised Cole, the other Dartmouth man. "There! They're opening up the hatches, and you'll get some fresh air and soon you can go out on deck. You'd better lie quiet for a while."

"Thanks, I will. Don't bother with me; I shall be all right soon."

He remained with his hands pressed against his head, — as if trying to press back into coherence thoughts which had been jarred loose, — and his companions departed to breathe the outer air.

Resentment and a desire for revenge assumed such sway over George's mind that at first his calamitous situation did not trouble him. He was without weapons, he weighed at least fifty pounds less than the foreman, but so savage was his wrath that he felt if he ever nursed his strength back he could kill the bully with his bare hands.

The fresh air blowing through the cabin soon drew George up on the lower starboard deck. Then, as he saw the green islands of the harbor receding and Boston Light pricking up out of the blue distance ahead, with nothing beyond it but open sea, his original desire to

escape from an absurd predicament thrust other thoughts aside — even the lust for revenge.

The sea was smooth; he was a good swimmer. Even if he could not make the nearest shore, he could keep afloat in that warm water indefinitely — that is, until one of the numerous passing boats should pick him up. He looked over the rail; it was only a few feet above the water, and the steamer was not moving rapidly. No one was looking at him; the foreman was not visible; the other hands were apparently all out on the port deck.

He took off his shoes and trousers and climbed up on the rail. There he balanced himself a moment, clinging to a stanchion and casting a backward glance. No one saw him. He took a long breath and dived far out.

Under water he swam as far as he could. When he came up and shook the brine from his eyes, he saw the stern of the steamer towering up not more than a hundred feet away; the next instant with an amazing suddenness, a figure came flying out from the upper deck and plunged into the water not far off.

The cry, "Man overboard!" was shouted from one to another, people ran about the decks and peered down; in a moment some sailors were rapidly getting a boat ready for lowering. Escape for George was now quite impossible, and he accepted rescue with resignation, which changed to stupefaction and disgust when he saw that the face of the approaching swimmer was, for him, the most unwelcome face in all the world.

"Hello," he said, trying to speak as casually as if they were meeting on Boston Common. "How are you, Rappallo?"

The sun had been in Graham Rappallo's eyes; he stood up to tread water and gaze at this object of his heroism who greeted him thus familiarly.

"Hello, Brandon," he said cheerfully, "I never dreamed it was you."

"It certainly is quite a shock to find it's you," replied George.

"What the devil are you up to? You don't look as if you were trying to drown yourself."

"Nothing was further from my mind; I was simply trying to escape from the cattle deck. Steve Foster talked me into going over with him as a cattle man, and then failed to show up. I decided I did n't care to go alone; that's all. I can make the shore all right, if they'll only let me."

"I'm afraid they won't," said Rappallo; he looked back at the ship's boat, which was now in the water. "They'll take you aboard in spite of yourself. But you must come up into the cabin; I'll fix things with the purser."

"I'd rather not, thank you." George was silent a moment. "If you just would n't tell Rosamond it was me, it would be decent of you; I'd be everlastingly obliged."

"I'll not tell her," Rappallo promised. He felt sorry for George, and uncomfortable himself at having unwittingly imposed this humiliation on him. He thrashed about in the water in an effort not to seem too studious of the other's plight. George floated in a resigned silence and watched the boat draw near. He could faintly see the faces of the people on board the ship, which had

stopped some distance off. He knew that among them, anxiously gazing, was Rosamond, and even at this distance he hardly dared to raise his eyes.

Rappallo paddled close. "If you're going to be abroad for a while," he said, "our address is Barings'. We might get together some time."

"Thanks," said George. "But I expect I shall want to take the first steamer back and punch Steve Foster's head."

A few moments more and he was hauled into the ship's boat, where he sat huddled in the stern, not lifting up his eyes lest he should be recognized by Rosamond. He had a curious shame of having her see him thus brought back to captivity; he felt that he could trust her husband not to betray him. Because of this desire to shield himself from her observation, his appearance in the boat was more hang-dog than he would have had it. And when he was deposited on the cattle deck, the foreman, his big arms crossed upon his chest, stood there surveying him with a triumphant sneer.

"You are a quitter, you are!" said the foreman.

CHAPTER V

THE RESCUER

IF to his fellow cabin passengers Graham Rappallo had become within an hour of sailing an object of interest and admiration, in the eyes of his wife he had been transfigured. From the day of her engagement to him up to the moment when he had leaped overboard, she had been frightened by doubts whether she really loved him enough; moments of distrust had alternated with moments of enthusiasm. The appearance of George Brandon at the wedding had disconcerted her, had compelled her imagination to dwell on the often considered vision which at the same instant was so poignantly in George's mind — suppose she were standing before the altar with George at her side instead of Graham! Even while the words of the marriage service were being read, she felt an agitating uncertainty whether in that moment, if she had the power, she would not exercise it to cause those two men to change places. George charmed her and pleased her; the unexpected glimpse of him as she moved up the aisle had given her a start of true romance, so that when she raised her eyes to meet those of the man who was to be her husband, she did not feel the anticipated thrill. The great event of her life she had passed through, giving it but a perfunctory attention, her mind in a haze of troubled and futile questioning — and when she realized that she had left the

church and was seated in the carriage beside her husband she had cried out, "Oh, Graham, I want to go back and be married all over again!" And he had interpreted that as an expression of her rapturous contentment.

What she had needed was a demonstration on which to build anew her failing faith — faith in him and in herself. The morning after her marriage had providentially supplied it. She had been walking with him on the deck when he had suddenly broken from her, cried, "Man overboard!" and dived to the rescue — clearing the rail with a magnificent bound and shooting down with an arrowy flight while she stood frightened and speechless. Then when she saw his head emerge, saw him start with an overhand stroke for the distant swimmer, comprehension of his act thrilled her through and through with pride and love. He had done this deed of daring and had not been hurt; she leaned on the rail and watched the apparent rescue with a blissful complacency. She had known her husband was brave; to have him proved heroic the day after their marriage and in the sight of all filled her to overflowing with the emotion which she must cherish for her lord.

"There, he's got him! How splendid of your husband!" exclaimed Mrs. George Vasmer.

"What a frightfully high dive it was!" mused Mrs. Vasmer's daughter Dorothy.

They addressed their comments to Rosamond, for they had made their way as soon as possible after the sensational happening to her side. And for the first time she was glad that they were on board; hitherto,

although Dorothy was one of her best friends, she had been disposed to resent their presence. In taking passage on a slow cattle steamer she and Graham had counted rather confidently on evading the observation and society of their acquaintances. It had seemed a strange mischance to find Mrs. Vasmer, with her opulent purse and aristocratic tastes, on such a boat — a mischance due to the fact that she was susceptible to seasickness and had heard that the stability of the Catalonia gave comfort to the qualmish. Now Rosamond was grateful to the mischance — rejoiced that Dorothy was on board to report Graham's heroism and spread the fame of it.

Dorothy and her mother speculated with Rosamond as to the nature of the poor wretch now in process of rescue, and the cause of his predicament. Mrs. Vasmer inclined to the belief that he was some unfortunate who had undertaken to kill himself; her daughter pointed out that he had been keeping afloat and suggested that he might be a stoker who had been temporarily crazed by the heat. In support of this theory she called attention to the man's scanty attire. Rosamond thought that probably he was one of the sailors who had fallen overboard by accident. She was not much concerned with his personality, and as the ship's boat drew alongside, she cast only a compassionate glance down at the half-clad, bowed-over wretch who sat in the stern. Her husband, with his sleek and glistening black head, his clinging pink shirt and soggy white flannel trousers, had all her eyes.

Anyway, it was the part of modesty not to look too

closely while the human derelict — as the ladies agreed in picturing him — scrambled out of the boat upon the lower deck. There was no reason, however, for withdrawing their eyes when Graham Rappallo was hoisted into nearer view. There were smiles for him and a faint cheer, and a young woman who wore glasses leveled a camera at him with great deliberation and took his picture while he was still in the small boat and powerless to protect himself.

He would not wait even for a word or a glance from his wife, but ran to his stateroom, where she followed as rapidly as possible and conducted herself in a manner which he found somewhat embarrassing but exceedingly gratifying.

"Oh, Graham, I never knew before how much I love you!" she exclaimed when in dry clothes once more he stood before the mirror brushing his glossy black hair. She sat on the sofa and looked up at him wistfully.

"Did n't you, Rosamond?" he said, shooting down at her an amused and happy glance. "That 's worth a ducking any time."

"If anything had happened to you when you took that reckless dive, I could never have borne it, Graham; I should have wanted to jump overboard too. A week ago I could n't have felt that way."

"Ah," he said, suddenly turning and seizing her, "you are going to love me, you are, you are!"

It was one of those instant bursts of passion that pleased and scared her because they were as yet so novel. How they would affect her when she became more used to them she had not hitherto been able to foretell, but

now she knew. She would never be too scared by them any more.

"Who was the man, Graham?" she asked presently. "Was he trying to drown himself?"

"Oh, not at all. He was a poor devil of a cattle hand who had suddenly got homesick and decided to swim ashore; that was all. He might have made it; it seemed almost a pity to bring him back when he wanted to go home."

"Some time we must go down together and see him and try to do something for him," said Rosamond.

"No, don't you think of it," exclaimed her husband. "He'd hate that. The kindest thing we can do for him is to let him alone. He does n't want to feel that he's an object of pity; he's morbid enough as it is."

"Of course a man does n't like to be pitied by a man," said Rosamond. "But by a nice, compassionate, sympathetic woman —"

"Don't you do it!" cried Graham, laughing. "No, dear, honestly I know he'd much rather be let alone."

He said it with such conviction that Rosamond was impressed and somewhat reluctantly abandoned the idea which had popped into her head — the idea of being a ministering angel and thus the fit and worthy complement of her hero husband.

It was a luxury to find him regarded as that by every one on board, to note the open admiration behind the young woman photographer's glasses, the beaming approval which was in Mrs. Vasmer's eyes, the venerating glow which was in her daughter Dorothy's. These were manifestations which were most immediately and agree-

ably apparent to a woman. And Rosamond valued almost as much the captain's remark to her — "Your husband is prompt, Mrs. Rappallo — prompt. I understand he has been a soldier."

This understanding, which somehow crept about the ship, enhanced the glamour that was enveloping Graham. Rosamond would have been glad to rehearse to some of the eager ladies anecdotes of her husband's exploits under fire. Unfortunately he had never told her much about these experiences. "He does n't like to talk about them — too horrible," she said to Dorothy Vasmer; and Dorothy sighed and felt that her friend's husband possessed inexhaustible depths of romance.

Graham himself ascribed the interest of the passengers in him to the fact that he was a bridegroom. He sat in his steamer chair and read "The Napoleonic Wars." He said to Rosamond that they must visit some of the great battlefields — Wagram and Lodi and Waterloo; it would be interesting to study them.

"I know about Waterloo," said Rosamond eagerly. "It was the sunken road at Ohain that lost the battle for the French, — when their cavalry charged over the bluff and piled up in the ravine."

"That was the detail that Victor Hugo seized on," replied Graham. "It appealed to his imagination, and he made the battle turn on it. When we go over the battlefield, I'll show you how little that episode actually had to do with the result."

He fixed his eyes again upon his book, continuing, however, to caress her hand under the steamer rug. She did not resume her reading of her novel; she was

more content to lie back and watch her husband and enjoy the sensation of his caress. Looking at him, she meditated upon all that he knew of which she was ignorant, all the experiences that he had been through which she had never shared, and it seemed to her strange and wonderful that all this knowledge and experience had suddenly been incorporated into her own life. She felt that now, insensibly, it was part of her, and the thought gave her a proud happiness. She looked at her husband and pictured him in his khaki uniform, leading a charge up a bare hillside under a tropic sun, pointing forward with his saber while he looked back to urge on his men — the posture was transferred to her mind from some old picture-book of her more tender years. It seemed incredible that this quiet figure by her side should have moved amidst the roar of cannon and the storm of bullets, should have seen men fall dead and dying round him while he himself pressed on, intrepid, into the thickest of the carnage, should perhaps not only have seen violent death but dealt it — no, no, that was a question that she would never ask, that was a thing which she wished never to know. Yet the passing thought imparted to Graham an even more enthralling interest. She felt as she looked at him that the more she watched him, thought about him, studied him, the more completely did he fill her conception of all that a man should be. His dark smooth head, and the deep brown of his face, his long eyelashes and crisp black mustache, his straight nose and small flat ears and finely moulded mouth and chin all pleased her eyes; she felt, too, the character in the slim strong hand that was caressing hers.

But it was not till the next day that she knew really how much she loved him. For the next day there was a storm, and in spite of the stability of the Catalonia he was unheroically seasick. As he lay beside her in his steamer chair, with the color gone from his face and "The Napoleonic Wars" unopened in his lap, she leaned to him and said, —

"Poor dear! I feel as if you were my little sick boy! Oh, how I want to do things for you!"

CHAPTER VI

THE RESCUED

WITH Graham Rappallo, seasickness was an acute but passing phase; after twenty-four hours of its chastening, he was once more pacing the deck with Rosamond, feeling weak and spiritualized. The next day, feeling no longer weak and no longer spiritualized, he abandoned his bride after luncheon and repaired to the smoking-room. Rosamond sought out Dorothy Vasmer and was promenading the deck with her when Dorothy said, "Let's go below and see the cattle."

"All right," agreed Rosamond. "Perhaps we shall see the man that jumped overboard."

"And you can tell him you're the wife of the man who saved him," suggested Dorothy. "Won't it be exciting!"

They descended to the cattle deck and stood for a moment looking about them uncertainly. Across the doors which led to the cattle stalls was the sign, "No Admittance"; but a feminine instinct told the two young ladies that if they only lingered long enough, some obliging man would take on himself the responsibility for their disregarding the prohibition. In similar instances, when they had shown both curiosity and patience, such a solution had never failed them; and they glanced hopefully, indeed, seductively, at the two young cattle men

who were leaning against the rail on the starboard deck. The young men were at the moment engaged in administering courage to each other — a fact of which the two young ladies were femininely aware and which led them to assume a still more uncertain, helpless, bewildered, and lost appearance. Thereupon the two young men simultaneously knocked the dottle from their pipes and pocketed them, and with an air as if they had tightened up their belts, buttoned up their coats, and straightened their neckties, — none of which articles did they wear, — they advanced to do their chivalrous devoir.

"We were so anxious to see the cattle." The pleasant look in Rosamond's hazel eyes and the beguiling tone of her voice came spontaneously enough, for they were a wholesome, pleasant-looking pair of young men. "But that sign is so formidable. Does it really mean what it says?"

"This is the first chance we've had to find out," said one of the men recklessly. "If you really want to look in, we'd be glad to show you round. But the place is n't much to see, and it smells like a cow barn, only more so."

"Oh, we don't mind that." It was Dorothy who spoke and she engaged the other youth with eyes as friendly as Rosamond's, but gray. "We thought we'd come down and look for some excitement."

"We can't furnish much, but you're welcome to what we have." He threw the doors open and stood aside for them to enter.

They found themselves in a very dimly-lighted aisle between rows and rows of cattle tethered to iron stan-

chions and with hind quarters braced dismally to withstand the abhorrent reeling of this abominable and strange universe. A mournful bellowing proceeded from some individuals, the clank of iron chains from others; the closed portholes were unclean; the reek was, indeed, as the young man had said, that of a cow barn, only more so. But Dorothy walked on, looking to right and left with interest, and Rosamond followed her.

"Do they keep you very busy?" Dorothy asked her guide.

"Not very. We have to water them and feed them, but we have a good deal of time on our hands. The worst of it is the food — which is pretty bad."

"Is this your first trip as a cattle man?"

"First and last. We've just graduated from Dartmouth, and we're going over to have a vacation in Europe."

"Oh!" said Dorothy. Exclusively a Back Bay product she felt that, although Dartmouth was not Harvard, it was still a college, and that it was socially possible to be cordial to one of its graduates. Indeed, even if he had n't been a college graduate at all, if he had been an utter barbarian, this young man whom she addressed must have appealed to her as an attractive and agreeable person. He was very good-looking, with his light curly hair and level blue eyes, his fair skin and tall trim figure; he looked like an athlete, and he had the air of one gay, good-humored, readily responsive. Dorothy had been quite taken at once by the sound of his voice.

So she told the young man her name and Rosamond's. She was rewarded by learning that he was Sidney Han-

ford and that his stocky, dark-haired companion was Edward Cole.

"You're not the only cattle men on board, are you?"

"Oh, no, there are three others. They're over on the other side now watering the stock. We've just finished with ours."

Dorothy's curiosity could no longer be patient. "It was n't one of you that fell overboard, was it?"

"No," said Hanford. "That was another fellow — mighty good fellow, too. He did n't fall overboard, he jumped. He wanted to get ashore; he did n't want to make the trip, because the friend who was going with him failed him."

"It was Mrs. Rappallo's husband who jumped after him," announced Dorothy. "Do point him out to us, if you see him."

"But don't tell him who we are," interposed Rosamond, coming forward. "I suppose he's sensitive about the thing, and I should hate to make him uncomfortable."

The next moment at a turn in the passage, she encountered George Brandon face to face. He had an empty pail in each hand, his shirt was open across his chest, his hair was unkempt, and his face unshaven. In the dim light he and Rosamond peered at each other for a moment.

"George!" she exclaimed.

"Yes; you've trailed me to my lair." He looked at her with a deprecating, whimsical smile.

"Do tell me — what are you doing here?"

"Looking after the cattle."

"Yes, but how did you come to do such a thing?"

They drew away from the others, who dropped back.

"Another friend of yours decided that he needed a sea change and some strenuous work and wanted company. But evidently he thought better of it overnight; anyway, he failed to appear before the ship sailed."

"Then it was you that— why did n't Graham tell me?"

"Because I asked him not to." George flushed. "I did n't want you to know that I had cut such a pitiable and ridiculous figure."

"I'm sorry you felt that way. You know, you could never be either pitiable or ridiculous to me."

"I am to myself, anyway. I feel as if, though I'm thirty years of age, I had acted like a kid of sixteen."

"I — it's hard for the person who's responsible to say anything comforting." She looked at him with soft eyes, — and he wished more than ever that if those were the eyes of friendship he could know what it was to look into them when they were the eyes of love. She was thinking at the moment that it was his very juvenility which had always made him seem appealing to her, which at times had perilously moved her, and which was a rather nice trait in him even now. "Did n't you want very much to get ashore?"

"Very much. I felt that I knew a hundred more agreeable ways of killing time."

"But that is n't all that you think of."

"It's too early for me to tell just what I do think of. I have n't even decided whether to take the first steamer back or to roam round Europe for a while. I feel that I have had about enough of chasing butterflies."

"Oh, George! Did you mean that for me?"

He had not been unaware of the innuendo in his speech, but now, at her hurt glance, he hastened to disclaim it.

"Of course," he said, "you were the butterfly that I most wanted to add to my collection. But now that it's impossible, collecting others does n't any longer interest me so much. Nothing interests me so much."

"You have a profession."

"How I wish I had devoted myself to it! To be a doctor whom people wanted might have compensated me a little for not being the man whom the girl wanted!"

"You don't feel bitterly towards me, do you, George?"

"No, not towards you, you dear thing. I feel bitterly towards myself — for having been so inconsequent and drifting. If only, when this happened, I'd had some routine to occupy me, some definite work to hug a little closer to my bosom, I should n't then be holding my poor heart quite so tenderly."

"You don't look as if that was your occupation," she said, with a smile. "Anyway, George, it's a nice heart, and some day some nice girl will hold it tenderly for you."

"I doubt it," replied George. "Girls don't do that sort of thing without encouragement. No, I shall frivol round Europe for a while, since I'm necessarily bound there; and then I shall go back home and frivol round Boston for a while, and then I shall be ready, I suppose, to go after more butterflies."

"I see; you do reproach me. You feel that I did n't play fair. But when a girl really falls in love, George,

the fairest thing she can do is to go right ahead. There can be no chance then for anybody else — no matter how kind and friendly her feeling for others may be."

"I realize all that. No, I was n't reproaching you. I am merely disgusted with myself for getting into my present situation."

"It is rather nasty," Rosamond admitted, looking about her. "But you can easily transfer your quarters to the cabin. There is plenty of room. Do, please."

"It's very tempting," said George. "But I prefer to fight with the beasts below here — at Ephesus. Go back to the cabin, Rosamond, and don't come down again."

She looked at him with surprise and question in her eyes. "Why, don't you want to see me again, George — when we're crossing on the same boat?"

"No."

"But, George!" she said appealingly, after a moment of silence.

"Good heavens, Rosamond!" He turned away.

Rosamond flushed, looked at him with hurt and angry eyes, and said in a low voice, "You are very unkind."

She turned and walked back to Dorothy; George, leaning against the rail, did not even follow her with his glance.

"Well, Dorothy," she said, "it's all very interesting, is n't it? I think I'll go up to my stateroom now. — Thanks, ever so much, for showing us round."

The two young men expressed their pleasure. Dorothy knew that George Brandon had been one of Rosamond's suitors, and gave her a look, interested and a little scared; she saw that Rosamond was striving to conceal emotion.

On her way to her cabin, Rosamond passed the open door of the smoking-room and glancing in saw her husband playing cards, a pipe in his mouth and a glass on the table before him. The sight incensed her.

Alone in her stateroom she closed the door, sat down upon the couch, and gave herself up to unhappiness. She thought of all those sweet and tender and passionate visits from George Brandon in the past. She wondered how and why she had held out against him. She felt she could give her soul for one more tremulous wooing appeal from him. She looked round the little cabin and saw the traces of her husband with anger and revolt. His toothbrush and shaving-brush, visible on the shelf over the washstand, revolted her. Into what abominable intimacy had she suddenly been transported! She thought of the day when George had made a shy and desperate effort to win her by putting an arm about her and giving her a kiss; the indignation she had felt seemed now too absurd.

The door opened and her husband entered. "Why do you come in without knocking?" she asked. "You take me for granted already."

"Oh, I'm sorry." He spoke contritely; he sat down by her side and put his arm round her.

"Don't do that." She drew away from him. "I wonder if I love you. Why did I marry you!"

He looked at her, he touched her hand entreatingly, but she withdrew it and sat with averted face.

"What have I done, dearest?" he asked. "Is it just that I did n't knock? I'll be careful in future. But there must be more than that."

"I've just been seeing George Brandon. You did n't tell me it was he. — I— he really loves me. And I've treated him so badly!"

"I can't believe that. He went away, he never wrote to you, — and you had promised him nothing."

"Oh, he wanted to have me miss him; I felt it, I knew that was it. And I had always let him think there was hope. I had always felt that some time I would marry him. Why did you come in and spoil it?"

"For only one reason, of course." She again tried to draw away from him, tried to push him away, but he calmly took possession of her, held her arms close to her sides in his embrace, and talked soothingly in her ear. "Dear little girl, do you think George Brandon is the only one who loves you?"

She was silent a moment. "I think you love me a little, but not the way George Brandon does; not the way I like to be loved. And oh, if you knew how I always looked forward to his coming, how happy I always was when he was with me! I must have been mad to marry you — mad and wicked!"

"You were neither mad nor wicked," said her husband. "Have n't you looked forward — a little — to seeing me? Have n't you been happy — a little — with me? Don't think only of the times with Brandon. Think of those with me."

"I was fascinated by you, I think; and perhaps I fascinated you. But we never loved each other; we never understood each other."

"If we don't now, we will learn. Anyway, I love you. That you must know."

"I'm not sure. Already you leave me for the smoking-room. You sit more interested in your 'Napoleonic Wars' than in me. You don't try to give me a good time. You talk to me about campaigns and battles and killing people — and I think that war is nothing but murder. Oh, I was mad to marry you — mad."

He held her more tightly and spoke softly in her ear. "I suppose I had Othello's example in mind. I loved you, I wanted you to love me — and Desdemona, you know, loved Othello for the dangers he had passed."

"Yes, that's why I first fancied I loved you," she said. She was silent for a few moments; then, to his infinite relief, she turned her eyes towards him. They were full of questioning and uncertainty and a desire to be given assurance and support. "Oh, Graham, I thought I loved you. But seeing George Brandon has upset me so! I think I love each of you — in different ways — and it seemed as if I loved George more in the right way!"

"I don't believe it. Why, if you had married George and then had suddenly come upon me, in just such circumstances, would n't you have been upset, too?"

"Yes, perhaps, but not so much."

"Oh, you can't tell about that. I love you, anyway, Rosamond, more than George Brandon does; I know I do, because no man could love you more. And there's just one thing I'm sure of about women; a woman in time comes to love that man most who, as time shows, loves her most. So if you don't love me now with all your heart, I'm still not discouraged. Only say you love me a little."

She hesitated, and then in a small, obedient voice said, "Yes, I love you a little."

"And now kiss me."

"Just a little kiss."

She put up her lips, and suddenly he was crushing her in his embrace and kissing her with a violence which, if kisses alone could kindle love, must have started a conflagration.

CHAPTER VII

PROGRESS OF A HONEYMOON

IN less than three months Graham Rappallo and his wife each recognized, secretly, that in certain respects their marriage was an unsatisfactory one. Recognizing this individually, each was, first of all, anxious to prevent the other from realizing it, and next determined not to let anybody else ever suspect it. Doubtless through some such steadfast resolution many marriages that at first pass for happy achieve happiness in the end. Rosamond's pleasure was in life; Graham's pleasure was in work. Such a difference need not inevitably drive husband and wife apart; it may even sometimes enable them to supplement and stimulate each other. But for two persons of such contrasting traits a long honeymoon is liable to work mischief, and Graham and Rosamond had embarked upon a too extensive honeymoon. They had plotted it all out carefully, or rather Rosamond had done most of the planning, for she was far more familiar with Europe than Graham was, and she promised herself and him a special delight in showing him the places that she loved and with which she had associations. London to begin with; they could be there for the last two weeks of the "season"; two weeks then of loitering through Warwickshire and down the Valley of the Wye; next, to Trouville for a glimpse of the summer gayeties of the gayest people in the world;

a month in Switzerland — Lucerne, St. Moritz, and Interlaken; and then Venice, of course, — a honeymoon in Europe that did not include Venice was unthinkable. From Venice to Vienna, and then to Paris, where they could have nearly a month before sailing for home.

Graham's first intention had been to absent himself from his office and his military duties — for he was Captain of the Troop, which was due to take part in the autumn maneuvers of the militia — for six weeks. But Rosamond so plainly regarded that period as inadequate and in making her plans showed so clearly the necessity of their being gone for three or four months that he gave a reckless acquiescence. "Don't let your sense of duty cut short the best time that I shall ever have in all my life," she pleaded. It seemed to him so sweet that she should think this, and not only think it but say it, that he added two extra weeks to the total amount that she asked for.

Yet even in those transports of triumphant love, he had felt the disappointment that should never be the after-fruit of whole-hearted sacrifice. He had felt it in relinquishing to his partner the preparation of the most interesting and important law case that had yet come into his hands. Even more keenly did he feel it in tendering his resignation as Captain of the Troop. It was a particular gratification to him that the Troop declined to accept it. Still, he should miss the maneuvers; and he was much disturbed to find himself wishing that he could get away from his honeymoon to go to them.

For a month he endured the exactions of his vacation pretty well. He even found pleasure in doing

things that in the society of any one else would have bored him unspeakably. To spend a perfectly good morning driving aimlessly in the park, or passing at a snail's pace through a picture gallery, or viewing relics of early architecture seemed to him mere dawdling; and he was impatient of those who dawdled and of those who puttered. In going abroad, he maintained, each man should seek the things that interested him; he himself could find enough to study in the law courts and the battlefields. Rosamond tried to convince him that he could share her interest with some pleasure and profit to himself, and he tried to admit that he was persuaded. If the things at which she looked with such incomprehensibly eager and delighted eyes were stupid to him, her companionship was at least not stupid. He did not tire of being with her. He felt proud of her, and glad when he noticed with how much more vivid interest the eyes of sight-seers rested on her than on those classic attractions that were starred in their Baedekers.

It was not until they crossed over to the Continent that the honeymoon became a little cloying. They knew nobody at Trouville; in England they had been meeting many friends, and even when they were in places where they knew no one, they had never felt that they were intruders. In Trouville Graham very soon felt this. He did not understand these people; the place very clearly belonged to them, not to him; in fact, he soon decided that he would not wish to have any share in it. He was incurably provincial; the Latin races, although they had furnished him with some mili-

tary heroes, were decadent and inferior. These wealthy and absurd Parisians at Trouville he suspected of devoting their lives to intrigue and immorality. Their idle luxury was reprehensible beyond any to be found at an American summer resort. Oddly enough, the thing that prejudiced him most was an episode that Rosamond thought charming in its simplicity. They were sitting on the beach one morning; children were playing near them; there were little parties of vivacious young women and even more vivacious middle-aged men strolling by. One of these parties sat down a few yards away. There were two young women, two black-bearded, dandified men; they all talked with a shrill, rapid gayety, the women gesticulating prettily, the men with eagerness.

"There are few things that it's necessary to make such a fuss about," Graham remarked to his wife. "That's what I object to in these people — their theatricality. Their enthusiasm is always under forced draught."

"I like it," said Rosamond. "I don't like stodgy people."

That morning for the first time she was acknowledging to herself that she would welcome a little temporary relief from her husband's society. Something about him was jarring to her nerves.

One of the black-bearded men suddenly began to take off his shoes. The young women clapped their hands joyfully, the other man threw out his palms and seemed to be pronouncing a facetious oration over his friend. Off came the other shoe, off came both socks; chattering exuberantly in response to the rallying cries

of his companions, the sportive gentleman rolled his trousers up above his knees, exposing a fragile white ankle and a length of slender white calf; then he thrust his socks into his shoes, tied the shoes together by their lacings, and slung them across his shoulders. Taking up his walking-stick, he rose and made his leisurely way down to the edge of the water, where he strolled along, letting the wavelets ripple up over his ankles. His friends talked vivaciously among themselves and gave him no further notice; he attracted no special attention from the other people on the beach, and he did not seem to desire it; he was apparently taking the simple pleasure of a child in wading. But Graham glowered at him and muttered an unfavorable opinion of the Frenchman's "antics."

"I don't think he has any comic intention," said Rosamond. "He's just being perfectly natural."

"I'm afraid I shall never appreciate the perfect naturalness of the French," replied Graham.

"I think it rather sweet of him to take such a childish pleasure in dabbling his toes," Rosamond said.

"I would think better of him if he went in swimming like a man," Graham answered.

Rosamond made no other comment; Graham, feeling that he had somehow displeased her, was silent. They watched the innocent object of their discussion; he picked his way along in the curling ripples, prodding his stick in the sand and turning over shells, which he paused now and then to examine with acute interest; some bathers were springing up and down farther out in the water, and he stopped and gazed at them for a

while; he even waded out until his slim shanks were quite immersed. At last he sat down by the edge of the water, used his pocket handkerchief as a towel, and put on his shoes. Then he returned briskly to his party and began to urge upon them with enthusiasm the desirability of following his example.

"I think," Rosamond said suddenly, "we will leave Trouville to-morrow, and go up to Brussels. Then you can inspect the field of Waterloo."

"But your friend, the Countess of Cassières, who is arriving day after to-morrow!" exclaimed Graham. "You know you're engaged to dine with her on Saturday. Oh, no, we can't leave to-morrow."

"I will cancel the engagement," said Rosamond. "I have decided that you would n't like the Countess; and probably the Countess would not like you. She and I can renew our friendship some time when I come to France alone."

Graham caught her hand. "Rosamond," he cried, anxiously, "don't say things like that."

She rose. "We have stayed in Trouville long enough. A change of scene will be good for us. Let us leave this afternoon."

He walked with her to the hotel, protesting. "I know you like it here; I know you want to stay and see your friend."

"No, I'm bored with the place. We'll go to Brussels — and you can show me battlefields."

She said it pleasantly — even in the tone of expectant happiness. Graham felt subdued and ashamed.

They finished their packing that morning; at lunch-

eon Rosamond met Graham's solicitous efforts at conversation with cheerful eyes and a smile. She did not have much to say herself, but Graham felt that he was no longer in disfavor. His spirits brightened; he resolved to be more discreet in future and more tolerant, he would try not to trample on her particular prejudices and prepossessions. But he was glad to be leaving Trouville. After all, he had so far done everything that his wife wanted to do, gone just where she wanted to go; it was proper now that for a short time his own tastes and desires should be consulted.

They had the compartment in the train to themselves. Rosamond sat during most of the trip looking out of the window. Graham was suddenly shocked out of his soothed complacency by seeing a tear start from her eye. She brushed it away with her handkerchief. Graham slipped his arm round her and said in distress, "You're not crying, Rosamond? Tell me, dear, what have I done?"

But she could tell him nothing. "I don't know why I'm crying, Graham. I'm rather unhappy. Just let me cry."

He besought her, he tried to comfort her, but she would not tell him why she wept. Her tears flowed for a while, and even after they had ceased, Graham felt that it was little better, for she sat silent and looked away from him out of the window, in spite of all his entreaties and appeals.

She was thinking how unkind he had been — and excusing him in the same breath. Of course he had not guessed how eagerly she had looked forward to seeing

the Countess, who had been one of her dearest school friends. After having been for so long in such uninterrupted and novel intimacy with a man, Rosamond had found herself thirsting for the sight of a girl friend, rejoicing eagerly at the prospect of the Countess's arrival.

Moreover, she could not help imagining how much happier she might have been in a place like Trouville with George Brandon.

CHAPTER VIII

VENICE

FREQUENT encounters with pleasant people may make even the most wearisome honeymoon pass pleasantly; at least this was the uncommunicated thought of both Rosamond and Graham after they had been two weeks in Switzerland. Rosamond had found the study of battlefields as unenlivening as Graham had found the promenade at Trouville. She felt that this need not have been the case, that properly guided and instructed she could have taken almost as intelligent an interest in them as did her husband; but either he pursued his studies and surveys in the absorbed intensity of silence or he overpowered her with details. For all his copiousness, she brought away from the two days' inspection of the field of Waterloo nothing more vivid or explanatory than the picture that Victor Hugo had fastened in her mind of the French cavalry piling up in the sunken road at Ohain.

In Switzerland Rosamond played tennis, made excursions on foot or on horseback, rose to look at sunrises, loitered in little shops, read and talked on hotel verandas, dug out bits of local history, and collected various contemporary impressions. She never went far afield to gaze at grandeur. A charming view from her window with which she might grow familiar was more to her than the sublime spectacles that form episodes for the

tourists. Graham, on the other hand, climbed mountains. In their respective pursuits, they found congenial companions; they were not often companions for each other. Dutifully every evening at dinner each rehearsed to the other the gleanings of the day; the latter courses of the *table d'hôte* were often eaten in silence. Sometimes in these arid silences Rosamond wondered if this conscientious, carefully affectionate, strangely tedious mate of hers had really been the gallant cavalier of her romance, the daring soldier, the hero who had dived to the rescue—! The thought of that act invariably gave her lips a bitter twist; she dwelt with mockery on the hero worship that it had occasioned. The essential bravery of her husband's act was obscured for her in the belated revelations of the circumstances, in the exhibition of two crestfallen faces — of which one was George Brandon's. To humiliate one who had already been defeated and who might have had the victory — Rosamond thinking of it felt a softness that was more than pity for George. And then, thus harsh one moment towards her husband, she softened towards him the next; a native loyalty and justice and affection righted her capsizing thoughts. Often he would be no less bewildered than enraptured by warmth blooming suddenly out of stony coldness, her soft arms round his neck, her voice penitent and soothing as it murmured, "I love you, Graham; oh, I love you, dear." Then from his own heart the stored-up tenderness would be released; holding her close he would protest his love with kisses; and when at last they drew apart, it would be to look at each other smiling and starry-eyed. Rosa-

mond never looked so radiant or so charming as in the flush after one of these confessions; Graham never seemed so handsome or so nobly exultant as when the kisses were still fresh upon his lips. Each realized this fact about the other; the understanding drew their hearts together. Graham once said in one of these moments, "Nobody ever sees you when you look like that but me, Rosamond." And Rosamond answered, "You never did look like that for any one but me, did you, Graham?"

Capricious outbursts of affection succeeded by spasms of revolt or periods of almost forgetful indifference — this was their honeymoon. They passed from place to place; and in each place where they stopped, they passed through all the varying temperamental vicissitudes; storm and cloud and fog and sunshine moved with them and had each one its season. So at last they came to Venice, which to Rosamond should have meant the very climax of delight. Indeed, she and Graham were never closer to each other than when they arrived at midnight and by moonlight, and were rowed through the narrow waterways under the arched bridges and between the dark sepulchral palaces, out suddenly into the glory of the shining Grand Canal. They sat hand in hand. "Oh, yes," murmured Graham. "This is the best of all." Rosamond pressed his hand ecstatically. "Yes," she said. "Nothing ever was so perfect as this. Oh, I knew you must feel so about it, Graham."

No, he could not be insensible to the picturesqueness, the never-failing freshness, the ever-present antiquity, the rich romance of Venice. It beguiled him for a day

or two as a fairy tale beguiles a child. Standing on the Riva delli Schiavoni he expressed to Rosamond the wish that he might be carried back for just one day to the time when Venice was the mistress of the seas. "Just to see a victorious fleet come in here and be welcomed by the doges and populace — the color and the splendor of it!" he sighed. "Would n't you give something to have been there on such a day?"

"You would n't wish yourself back five hundred years and leave me waiting here, would you?" Rosamond asked jealously.

"Oh, yes, I would, I should be so interesting when I returned. I should never bore you any more."

"You don't often bore me. When you do, it's just because I'm selfish and don't like to see you more interested in other things than me."

"Oh, but you're always the one great big thing!" he cried.

"Am I?" Her eyes brightened believingly. "Oh, I'm so glad you think so. Shall we take a gondola over to the Lido? You'll find that almost as amusing as going back five hundred years."

Stout German ladies in striped bathing-suits and hats shaped somewhat like those of the Pilgrim fathers, but made of straw, promenaded barefoot on the beach. Some of them smoked cigarettes and were accompanied by scantily attired gentlemen with whom they seemed to be conversing with the utmost dignity. Family parties lay about on the sand, taking sunbaths, the heads of swimmers bobbed on the blue Adriatic; and Rosamond and Graham sat in the pavilion and looked on

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with the cheerful amusement of two happy persons who are feeling that the world is created for delight.

That was the feeling that Venice had always inspired in Rosamond. Graham shared it for two days. At night when they went out upon the Grand Canal and heard the singing from the illuminated floats, Graham felt the same romantic tenderness that the opening bars of the march from "Lohengrin" had roused in him at his wedding. It did not matter that the piano was out of tune and that the voices of the singers were not especially melodious; the spirit of the melodies, the moonlight streaming across the water and beating on the noble palaces beyond, the hooded gondolas hovering close, each one a craft with a mysterious past and a romantic present, and most of all this girl beside him, whose hand lay warm within his own — all quickened Graham's imagination — and it is imagination that gives life to love.

But in Venice a man whose impulses are all towards activity soon grows restless. When the novelty had worn off and only the queerness remained, when the labyrinthine byways had ceased to be alluring and had become irritating, and particularly when the first enchanted wonder began to be expelled by the absorption of enlightening information, Graham revolted against the tyranny of the place. He longed for the open country and a horse to ride. His thoughts reverted to the battlefields of Lombardy past which the train had borne him. He pursued the study of Titian and Tintoretto with docility, but it was only the long swims in the afternoon at the Lido that made the second week

in Venice tolerable to him. Rosamond was still eager and enraptured. The weather was perfect, the little children along the canals pleased her eye and touched her heart, the galleries and churches had not lost their charm; and all the pleasant objects and experiences were made twice dear to her by her husband's presence. She felt that not before in all their honeymoon had they shared a pleasure so completely; she dwelt with such caressing satisfaction on his enthusiasm during the first few days that his subsequent more quiet acceptance of her enthusiasm had not disappointed her.

One evening as they sat at dinner in the hotel, he said to her, "Let's see; you were planning to stop here a week longer, were n't you, Rosamond?"

"Why, yes. Are you tired of it, Graham?"

Her expression was so surprised and hurt that he had not the courage to tell her the truth. "Oh, no; it's the most delightful place I've ever been in. But I will admit I'm beginning to pine for a little run in the country. And there are so many good battlefields within easy reach. But I certainly don't want to cut short your stay in Venice, not by a single hour."

"You don't understand," she said wistfully. "I can't really enjoy anything now, unless you enjoy it too."

That confession of her dependence touched him. "Dearest," he declared, "I've never enjoyed anything so much as being here with you. We won't cut it short at all. That was just a passing notion — you know my mania for battlefields makes me foolish at times."

She responded to this with a docile smile, and he bestirred himself to convince her of the sincerity of his in-

terest. They had n't yet been over to the Giudecca or to San Giorgio, and of course they must visit the glass factories; there were any number of things that he wanted to do. Was there, by the way, any one event that marked the passing of the power of Venice on the seas? She answered him cheerfully, but on her brow and in her eyes there was the abstracted look of the wife who is not deceived.

It rested there frequently during the next two days and subdued his sprightliness. What she had said to Graham proved disquietingly true; as soon as she became aware of his restlessness, her own capacity for extracting pleasure from her surroundings vanished. Realizing this, she felt alarm at the surrender of her personality that she had made. Henceforward for her happiness she must depend on her husband, his patience and love. She had never really believed that she should find herself so unreservedly in his hands. "Graham," she said on the third day, "I believe that we've exhausted Venice; anyway, I feel that it would be pleasant to make a change. What are the places that you wanted to see?"

So it happened that they were a week on their way up to Paris. They visited the battlefields of Marengo and Lodi.

CHAPTER IX

THE SOUND OF TRUMPETS FROM AFAR

IN a palm-shaded corner of the hotel courtyard, Mrs. Vasmer was scanning the Paris edition of the New York "Herald"; her daughter Dorothy sat by her side idly waiting for her to finish and hand over that chatty publication. It was the half-hour after breakfast, when Mrs. Vasmer always succumbed to inertia before gathering her forces for the day, and when Dorothy was most possessed with the spirit of impatient energy. This morning she was more than usually eager, for her mother had promised to come with her and view the heavenly black and old-rose ball gown which had so taken her fancy the day before at Paquin's. Because she wished her mother to accompany her in the most benignant state of mind, she was striving hard not to be restless; and because she had conjured up a fascinating picture of herself in that black and old-rose gown, her gray eyes were gently pensive and her soft lips were parted, as if in brooding tenderness. So rapt was she in her vision that the cry startled her, — "Why, Dorothy! Can it be!"

She looked up to see Rosamond Rappallo and her husband. "Oh, you dear people!" She sprang from her chair, flung her arms round Rosamond and kissed her. "Where have you come from? Do tell me you're going to stay! You've dropped down like an angel from

heaven, for there's the loveliest gown at Paquin's, you must make mother buy it for me. Oh, my dear, what fun we shall have in the shops!"

She hesitated long enough to give her hand to Graham and to permit her mother to join in the greeting.

"Yes, we just got in from Italy last night," Rosamond explained. "Oh, yes, a wonderful time."

"You went to Venice?" Mrs. Vasmer asked.

"Yes; it was lovely there — moonlight nights, beautiful weather —"

"We went to Venice on our honeymoon, my husband and I." Mrs. Vasmer's tranquil voice had a momentary note of wistfulness. "I've never quite dared to go back to it since then, for fear of spoiling what was so perfect. And yet I hover round the thought of it. — You'll find that you always will."

Rosamond was transfixed by a pang at the thought that in her honeymoon she had missed something that others had found and treasured in theirs. But she answered in a steady voice. "I'm sure that I shall — and some time we'll be brave and go back to Venice, won't we, Graham?"

"Of course," he said cheerfully. He preferred commonplace to sentiment as a topic of general conversation, and he turned to Dorothy. "Have you been here long, Miss Vasmer? Where have you been and what have you been doing?"

"We've just come down from Munich, where we had a couple of weeks of opera. We shall be here about a month, I hope. Father is sailing from New York tomorrow — coming over to take us home. — Oh,

Rosamond, my dear, whom do you think we saw in Vienna?"

"I can't imagine."

"Dr. Brandon. We met him the day after we got there, hurrying to a medical lecture, with his books under his arm, just like a schoolboy. He could barely wait to hear where we were stopping. But he called the next afternoon, and then he dined with us twice, and took us to an open-air band concert. He was too busy to do more than that."

"Too busy?"

"Yes, he was studying brain surgery under some famous man — I can't possibly remember his name. He'd gone straight there from Liverpool, and he'd been at it all summer. He's still at it, I suppose, — although I believe he said the course, or whatever it was, would end early in September."

Graham lighted a cigarette and flicked the match away with an emphatic gesture. "That makes me feel like a loafer," he said. "I feel that it's about time for me to be doing something, too."

"But, Mr. Rappallo, Dr. Brandon is n't on his honeymoon," exclaimed Mrs. Vasmer.

In the silence that followed all four flushed and felt uncomfortable. There was a startled recognition of the fact that the bridegroom had been detected yawning, as it were, over his happiness and had been reproved in a manner too open to be considerate of either his feelings or his wife's. Mrs. Vasmer tried quickly to make amends.

"After all, Dr. Brandon has just finished with a six

months' vacation in South America, and so finds work a pleasant novelty. And I know that in your case, Mr. Rappallo, though it may be pleasant, it is n't a novelty. Through my husband I keep in touch with the profession."

Graham expressed polite satisfaction that his activities had commended themselves to one of Mr. Vasmer's eminence.

"Yes, they have," Mrs. Vasmer assured him. "And now I'll tell you something — although I usually don't approve of complimenting people so flatly. When I first heard that you were going to marry Rosamond, I asked my husband about you; and he said in his most deliberate way — and when he wants to be impressive he is always deliberate — 'In my judgment, no girl could do better.'"

"There!" cried Rosamond, clasping her husband's arm; and the faces of all were at once so charged with pleasure that Mrs. Vasmer felt she had amply atoned for her lapse. She rose from her chair and said, —

"For the last half-hour Dorothy has been straining at the leash. Won't you come with us, Rosamond, and help us to decide about the ball dress?"

Rosamond turned a questioning glance on Graham.

"Yes, run along," he said. "I'll write some letters and amuse myself. See if you can't pick out something pretty for me to give you."

"Is n't he a nice husband!" cried Rosamond. "Indeed, I will, Graham dear."

So off with Dorothy and Mrs. Vasmer she went — feeling quite gay and exultant at being in the company

of a girl friend again. The shop windows took on somehow a fresher interest, the interchange before them of enthusiastic comment or criticism was delightfully stimulating. At Paquin's Rosamond supported Dorothy's choice, and Mrs. Vasmer acquiesced in it. Dorothy then assisted Rosamond to pick out a green-and-gold ball dress for herself.

"Oh, but I can't!" cried Rosamond, aghast, when she had learned the price.

"It's so lovely," urged Dorothy. "If your husband saw it, he could n't resist it, I know. It's just the thing for your coloring; you'd be perfectly stunning in it. Men love their wives to be stunning when they go to balls."

"Yes, but I could n't suggest his giving me anything so expensive as that."

"Why not? If he can't afford it, he'll tell you so. If he can, it's a perfect crime for you not to have it. If you won't speak to him about it, I will."

"I suppose I might ask him just how far he was prepared to go when he told me to get something pretty for myself," said Rosamond doubtfully.

"Yes, do. And if his answer is n't satisfactory, tell him you'll economize in every other way, but you must have that gown. You must, you know; I've set my heart on seeing you in it."

"Well, I'll talk with him about it," Rosamond promised. "I do adore pretty things; when I stand and look at them I can feel my backbone soften. Is n't it too bad!"

"All attractive girls are that way," said Dorothy sententiously. "It is n't nice to be scrimpy."

"It would do you a lot of good, my child, to marry a poor young man," observed Mrs. Vasmer.

"Thank heaven my friends are mostly rather rich," was Dorothy's flippant reply. "Not that I'm likely to marry any of them, though."

"Is n't it funny how usual it is to marry strangers!" said Rosamond.

Dorothy shot a keen glance at her; they were passing out of the shop. "That's about the only way you can get any romance into your life. Romance is one thing; comfort's another. I have n't made up my mind yet which I shall choose. Of course comfort in the long run would be the best, I suppose — yet it would be horrid to look back and feel you'd never had the other."

"Yes, horrid," said Rosamond. Now that she was out on the street again, she was unaccountably thinking of George Brandon and the news that Dorothy had given of him. It was as if Dorothy had read her thought, for she said, quite irrelevantly, —

"Dr. Brandon told me that he is coming back to Boston to practice this winter."

"I wonder how long he will stick to it."

"He seemed very much in earnest about his work."

Rosamond was silent. The statement she had just heard assumed a wistful probability. Now that George's earnestness in the pursuit of her was over, what more natural than that he should pursue with earnestness that which on account of her he had neglected? She wondered if she could ever have so unsettled Graham's life and thoughts, and wished that she had done it before making her surrender. Now she

could never do it — and it was obviously not a thing that a woman should want to do to her husband.

Graham returned to the hotel in a pleasant state of excitement. He had found his way over to the Boulevard St. Germain, to the War Office, and there, as he was entering the door, had encountered Captain Pierre Fortrel.

"He was one of the military attachés with the American troops in Cuba," Graham explained to Rosamond. "We saw a good deal of each other down there, and still more on the transport coming home. In fact, he fell ill of a fever, and I helped look after him. He's now attached to the general staff, and has had a hand in planning the autumn maneuvers which are to take place next week near Poitiers."

"Oh," said Rosamond quickly. "You'd like to go to them, would n't you?"

Graham tried to affect indifference. "Oh, it would be rather interesting. Especially as Fortrel has offered to introduce me at headquarters. Of course, having the maneuvers on the scene of one of the great battles of the world is an additional touch. But it would be no place for a lady there, and I'm very well contented to be in Paris with you."

"I should n't be very well contented to have you on such lukewarm terms," said Rosamond. "You must tell Captain Fortrel at once that you will go with him. Yes, indeed, you must; it's much too interesting a thing for you to miss."

"I don't like the idea of leaving you here alone —"

"I shan't be alone. I shall be with the Vasmers.

You need n't have the slightest hesitation about leaving me. How long shall you be gone?"

"A week, probably."

"I shall get along finely. I shan't miss you at all."

"I'd rather you would n't say that."

"Why? Do you think that you will miss me?"

"Of course."

"If you really thought that you would n't want to go. You know you will be so active and interested and excited that you won't miss me in the least. If you don't know it, I do, Graham dear."

But to show him that she did not resent it, she slipped her arm around him and gave him an understanding, affectionate kiss. He caught and held her and kissed her with the sudden ardor that always gave her a momentary pleasant tingling of the senses.

"You're so sweet to me, Rosamond; I wonder how I can ever want to leave you for a moment! But I do sometimes, — for such a thing as this, for instance, — and the coming back to you will be all the sweeter."

"I should n't want you to be one of those uxorious husbands," said Rosamond. "The man who is too utterly satisfied with his wife's society is just a lazybones."

Graham made the mistake of giving to this statement his unquestioning assent. "But what will you do with yourself while I'm gone?" he asked.

"Oh, I shall go about among the shops with Dorothy."

That reminded him of something. "You promised me you'd get yourself something pretty. Did you?"

"No, but I saw a dress that I liked; only it was frightfully expensive."

"How much?"

"I don't dare to tell you."

"A thousand francs?"

"More than that."

"Much more?"

"Fifteen hundred."

Graham was silent for a moment, as if computing. "Get it," he said, "if you really like it."

"Oh, Graham, can you afford it, truly?"

"Yes, perfectly. And if you see other things that you like very much and they're within reason, get them, too."

"I should n't dare, Graham. You're always so generous. I'm afraid I should be extravagant — unless you named a sum that I was n't to exceed."

Again Graham was silent as if computing. "Well," he said, "while I'm gone you can spend a thousand francs — I mean on things for yourself."

"You are so generous to me, Graham. I don't believe really you can afford it."

"Oh, yes, I can," he answered. "Besides, this is our honeymoon."

That was not the happiest thing for him to have said. Showering her with gifts, he was trying to salve the hurt that his eagerness to rush from her side had inflicted. Already, she thought, he was buying his freedom with gifts. It was the way of husbands, no doubt, — but she wished that the occasion for resorting to it had not arisen on their honeymoon. Then she found that in spite of

this sentiment, the thought of the ball dress and the thousand francs had considerable potency over her injured feelings, and she vaguely regretted that it could have. It seemed to mark the vanishing of all the tender, mystical, ideal meanings that had hitherto clung for her round the word "bride."

On the morning of his departure the rain poured down. The skies were so dark that he had to shave by electric light; helping him pack in the disordered room, with the rain beating against the windows and with its insistent clatter seeming to add to the confusion, Rosamond felt unexpectedly miserable. She wished that he would give her a glance, read what was in her heart, and suddenly tell her that not for anything would he go away. Oh, if he would do that, how she could love him then! Bending over his bag and carefully arranging socks and shirts, she hid the tears that were in her eyes. Graham was stepping briskly about the room, chatting cheerfully, mainly to himself. — "Razors, yes, shaving-strop, neckties, handkerchiefs, shaving-brush — it's one of those things I'm likely to forget. — Yes, I have everything. — Now let's see if the old bag will shut."

He found that it would, and when he looked up at Rosamond, she was smiling. "You're a wonderful help at packing," he said. "Too bad it's such a beast of a day, Rosamond, but don't you care; you and Dorothy must have some sort of a spree."

"Oh, we shall," she assured him.

"Write to me and tell me all about yourself; you're sure you haven't mislaid the address? — All right. I'll

drop you a line as soon as I arrive. — It's about time the boy was coming for the bag."

"Had n't you better ring? You must n't miss your train."

"Oh, no, they 're always prompt in these hotels." And then, after a brief interval of silence, there was a knock on the door; the boy had come. After he had staggered out with the bag, Graham slipped his arm round his wife and said, "You're a brick to let me go, Rosamond. Have a good time and buy a lot of nice things to show me when I come back."

"I will," she promised. "Don't fall off a horse or get run over by a cannon or anything."

"No, indeed. If I do, I'll telegraph you. Good-bye, dear."

They kissed each other, and she accompanied him downstairs and saw him drive away, and gave him a last glance from smiling eyes.

But in her heart she felt wounded. If only he had found at the last moment that he could not leave her! Or even if in going he had shown her that he was on the brink of tears!

CHAPTER X

THE DESERTED BRIDE

ALL the morning Mrs. Vasmer had been fretting because she had received no word from her husband, who must have arrived in Liverpool two days before. In the afternoon Dorothy persuaded her to go with her and Rosamond to the Opéra Comique. "When we get back to the hotel, we shall probably find father waiting for us," she said. "You know he likes to surprise us."

Mrs. Vasmer's anxiety to return to the hotel and find that the surprise predicted was awaiting her interfered with her enjoyment of the performance. Driving home, she was eager and nervous with expectancy. Rosamond reflected that Mrs. Vasmer must have been married at least thirty years. "Should I be so excited, after all that time!" she wondered. And she thought again of Mrs. Vasmer's confession about Venice, and felt sad.

When they arrived at the hotel the concierge gave Mrs. Vasmer a telegram.

"Oh, he is n't here!" she exclaimed with disappointment.

She opened the telegram, and instantly the eager and expectant look on her face was swept away by terror. She trembled and caught Rosamond's hand and gripped it with nervous fingers — so bewildered and frightened

that she did not know that it was not her daughter to whom she clung.

"Dorothy, dear," she cried breathlessly, "look, dear. It's bad news; do — do you think it's very bad?"

Dorothy with a pale face read the message while Rosamond led Mrs. Vasmer to a chair in the courtyard.

"No," said Dorothy in a troubled voice, "no, mother, dear; it seems to me it can't be — so — so bad."

"What does it say?" asked Rosamond.

Dorothy held the message out to her, and she read: —

"CHRIST CHURCH HOSPITAL, LONDON.

"Operation on Mr. Vasmer appendicitis this afternoon. Condition serious but not alarming.

"ROXTON, Surgeon."

"Dear Mrs. Vasmer, you must n't dread anything," Rosamond said. "It's not alarming, the doctor says — and the fact that the operation is safely over —"

"But is it? It does n't say that, and his condition's serious — it means — oh, I don't dare to think what it means!" Mrs. Vasmer rose, still trembling, but with the firmness of self-control. "Dorothy, we must go to your father at once. I wonder if we can get a train tonight."

"I'll find out for you," Rosamond said. "I'll make all the arrangements and bring you word."

"Thank you, dear. Come, Dorothy; we must begin our packing now."

Rosamond learned that there was a train at seven o'clock, and that by taking it they could be in London

at eight o'clock the next morning. In half an hour she was driving with them to the station.

"My dear, you've been such a help to us," Mrs. Vasmer said. "And I feel so sorry at leaving you here all alone. Do telegraph your husband and have him come back."

"Oh, dear, no," said Rosamond. "I know Paris pretty well, and I shall find plenty to do."

At the gate she kissed them and bade them good-by, and with sympathetic eyes watched them while they followed the porter along the platform.

Returning in a fiacre to her hotel she felt depressed. The telegram had been ominous; she dreaded to think what Mrs. Vasmer and Dorothy might find upon their arrival in London. Not until this trouble had come upon them had she known how affectionate was her feeling for them. Now that her hands were empty and she could no longer help, she felt not the freedom but the constraint of her loneliness.

Her dinner that evening in the brilliant dining-room was a new experience. It was perhaps the first meal that she had ever eaten alone — the first meal certainly of such formality. She had dressed carefully, she wore her jewels, she was handsome; the eyes of the men dwelt on her. She had not minded this when she had been dining with her husband or with the Vasmers; she had even liked it. Now it disconcerted her; she felt as if she could easily break into sobs; she felt exposed, unprotected. She finished her dinner hastily, and going at once to her room resolved that until Graham returned she would not dine so publicly again.

She spent the evening writing to him, but although she described fully what she had done in the morning and the performance at the theater in the afternoon, she said nothing whatever of the departure of the Vasmers. She had been deterred by two considerations; one, that if she mentioned their departure he might feel compelled to come to her, and the other that if she mentioned their departure he might not think it necessary to come to her. It was the second possibility that she dreaded the more. The letter that she wrote was such as must surely have made the man who received it think of her with love and tenderness.

It was only a week that she had to wait for her husband's return — so she told herself with an effort at cheerfulness. A week — and surely she was not so poor a creature as to lack resources for occupying herself during that space of time. Hitherto she had always felt a shy and modest confidence in her courage and independence. But upon this evening it all seemed to have vanished. Married woman though she was, she seemed only an inexperienced and very lonely little girl.

She went to bed early; but with the lights out, instead of falling asleep she became harassed by terrifying thoughts. Suppose some disaster should befall Graham! He might meet with an accident, he might be stricken with typhoid fever; in military operations typhoid fever was always to be expected. Why had she not thought of this before; why had she ever let him go? She tried to think if there was anybody at all in Paris whom she knew, anybody to whom she might turn, but there was no one. The Countess of Cassières had not

yet returned to town; and Rosamond had not happened to encounter any American friends. As she lay in bed and thought about it, her isolation seemed to grow more and more appalling. She might fall ill herself, and there would be nobody to care for her; how desperate for Graham if she should die! She pitied him and yearned for him. The hours passed and she tossed restlessly. "Oh, Graham, dear, how could you have gone away from me!" she sighed. She who had never before felt lonely in her life and who had looked upon marriage as all companionship and comradeship was finding that it meant at times an undreamed-of loneliness too.

At last she slept; she awoke to see the window curtains blowing airily horizontal in shafts of sunlight. She dressed, and while she was dressing a postcard was slipped under her door. It was from her husband, and announced his safe arrival at the camp headquarters. He had written, "With my love," and had drawn after that a circle, which she knew was intended to designate a kiss. She pressed her lips to it and smiled at her silliness; then she put the postcard into her purse in order that, wherever she went, she might have that message with her.

"I don't look so very haggard," she thought with pleasure as she pinned on her hat. "What a fine morning! I think after breakfast I shall stroll over to the Luxembourg."

While she was at breakfast, a telegram was brought to her. She knew that it must be from the Vasmers; she opened it anxiously and read: —

"Arrived safely. Father quite comfortable; we feel hopeful. DOROTHY."

Rosamond said to herself, "I 'm so glad; oh, is n't it a fine morning!" And she looked happily out at the sunny courtyard, with its semi-tropical shrubs. How foolish had been her fears of the night before, and all her thoughts of death! She felt now exultant in her temporary freedom; what though it did mean loneliness! She had before her the thrill of possible adventure.

Leaving the hotel she walked down to the Garden of the Tuileries. The old gentleman who charmed the birds was there; the sparrows fluttered round him and alighted on his arms and shoulders and hat. He must be a kindly soul, she thought — and who would not be kindly in these pleasant open gardens? Yet what horrors they had seen!

She crossed the Pont Royal and walked slowly along the Quai Voltaire. In front of the Institut she stopped to watch two extremely able-bodied men who were making a living by lifting enormous heavy weights and then quickly passing the hat while the spectators still stood rooted in astonishment. Rosamond had dropped in a half-franc and was turning away when she heard her name cried out; she raised her eyes and saw George Brandon approaching her; he had plucked off his hat and was holding out his hand, and his face was as radiant as the morning.

"Rosamond!" he exclaimed. "George!" she cried. In the utterance of each name there was the clear accent of surprised delight. They stood, looking each into the

other's face, laughing eagerly, greeting each other over and over again excitedly, George still bareheaded, his eyes shining, his lips smiling, Rosamond with the tremulous trill of laughter that had always made her to him the most appealing creature in the world, and with a warm flush on her cheeks.

"Where are you going now, George?" she asked at last.

"This moment?"

"Yes."

"Wherever you are. — That is, if you'll let me."

That note of uncertainty and deference touched and somehow hurt her. In other days he would not have felt it necessary to ask permission. "Oh, I shall be so glad to have you with me!" she exclaimed. "I was going to the Luxembourg. Should you like that?"

"Above all things."

One of the strong men interposed politely with his hat. George transferred to it a coin which produced a profound obeisance.

"George, dear!" exclaimed Rosamond reprovingly as they walked away. "That was a two-franc piece!"

"Well, perhaps he deserved it," George answered. "I feel like enriching all the poor this morning."

They turned into the Rue de Seine. George walked by Rosamond's side feeling almost incredulous of his happiness. She was aware of his feeling and was pleased and touched, even while wondering at it — for on shipboard he had shown her that he was determined to uproot the sentiment that had flourished for so many years. She was quite brimming with the joyous excite-

ment at finding that he was still under her spell. To have him glancing at her again with the old admiration in his eyes and the gay smile on his lips inflated her with a buoyancy such as she had not often felt during her honeymoon. Indeed, as they walked towards the Luxembourg they presented the most charming appearance of two young Americans freshly arrived upon their wedding tour. Graham and Rosamond walking together had some time since ceased to attract such smiling attention as was now bestowed upon George and Rosamond.

"I'm very fortunate," George said. "I arrived only this morning and I'm leaving day after to-morrow; what luck to find you without the loss of a moment!"

"What luck!" Rosamond echoed; but she inwardly sighed, "Day after to-morrow!" She said aloud, "You don't give much time to Paris."

"Not now; I'm homeward bound. I'm sailing from Cherbourg day after to-morrow."

"Oh, are you!" Incautiously a note of envy crept into her voice. She tried to obliterate it by adding quickly, "I look forward to two or three more weeks here; Paris is just beginning to be gay."

"Yes, but I'm just beginning to be serious-minded."

"Dorothy Vasmer told me that you were."

"Oh! You've seen Miss Vasmer!"

"They've been stopping at the same hotel."

"Is she still there?"

She thought she detected eagerness in his question, and she was rather glad now to be able to answer, "No."

"I'm sorry. I hoped that I might encounter her

again. She's very attractive — and her mother's charming."

His regret was so clearly casual that Rosamond's momentary jealousy vanished. She told him of the misfortune that had befallen the Vasmers. George shook his head.

"English surgeons don't operate for appendicitis with the same success as our men. I hope all will go well, — Was it the gallery that you wanted to visit?"

"Oh, I shall have plenty of time to look at pictures when I'm alone." The admission of loneliness slipped out before she realized it; she reddened and added, "Let's go into the garden and find a pleasant seat where we can talk."

They passed through the gate, and George said, "Your husband does n't care much for sight-seeing?"

"I think we all get rather bored with it at times. There, if we go down this path we shan't be compelled to look at the twenty marble Frenchwomen. There 's a seat under a chestnut tree; shall we go there?"

"I don't care where we go. I'm having a good time."

"So am I. Well! Let's sit down and talk about all our good times."

She told him of the places she had visited and the friends she had met. She spoke of her husband's interest in battlefields — but she refrained from mentioning that it had now taken Graham from her side. She did not wish George to know of this act of desertion. Leaning forward with her hands resting on the ivory top of her parasol, looking round at him from under her pretty hat, she seemed to George more delightful than she had

ever been before, because she was more radiant with the pleasure of the moment; never before, he felt, had she been quite so glad to see him as she was now. The cause of this roused his curiosity; was it that she was so happy in her marriage that such joyous gayety always streamed from her — or was it that in the disillusion of her marriage the sight of her old lover was doubly welcome to her eyes? George hoped that she was happy, yet he would also have been glad to be assured that the cause of the warmth in her tone, the soft brilliancy in her eyes, was personal to him.

"Oh," she exclaimed suddenly, "I'm so glad you're willing to sit on a bench with me and talk! The last time we met, you made me feel that you'd never do anything like that again!"

"I was rather silly," he admitted. "My disappointment then was too sharp; I did feel that I could n't comfortably be near you any more. But a man overcomes that state of feeling in time — and it's foolish for him to deprive himself of little pleasures just because he can't have great happiness."

That speech, delivered so smilingly, wounded her; it declared his emancipation.

"You know," she said, "I don't quite like to think of myself just as one of your little pleasures."

"You liked even less to think of yourself as my great happiness," he reminded her.

"I wonder if women are unlike men in that they always want to have their cake and eat it too," she mused. "I shall really feel quite badly, George, when I hear of your engagement."

"That, I imagine, is a pain that you will never be compelled to suffer."

"Oh, yes." A mirthful glance from her eyes traveled slowly over his debonair person and rested on his whimsically inclined face. "You have traveled a long way since you left the steamer. Your goal may not yet be in sight, but it may confront you now any day, any hour."

"No girl can be my goal. Seeing you makes me know that."

"Ah, you must learn to take your little pleasures lightly."

"There is no pleasure unless one abandons one's self to it utterly."

"And will you do that to me to-day?"

"As far as I may be permitted. That is to say, until your excellent husband joins us. I have never liked to feel that I was the third person, and in this particular instance my dislike of that situation is poignant."

"I won't force you into it. In fact, to-day Graham is with some military friends — an attaché whom he knew in Cuba, and some others. That is how I happened to be alone this morning. I was expecting to lunch alone and pass the afternoon alone." — This she felt, was all truthful, even if not the whole truth; more, from a sentiment of wounded pride, she could not bring herself to confess.

"Ah, but alone no longer! Then this day is mine."

"Would you like it? Would you care to lunch with me?"

"I with you — you with me — both of us together!

Was n't I lucky to be walking on the Quai this morning!"

For a moment she looked at him softly; she had never realized before how sweet and nourishing to her happiness was the expression of his admiration and his love.

They walked slowly across the Pont de Carrousel, through the Tuileries Garden, up the Rue Royale; it was a golden, peaceful, still September noon; strolling along, in response to Rosamond's questions, George outlined his plans. He had been fortunate enough to obtain the position of assistant to Dr. Armazet; it was a place that would insure him plenty of practice in general surgery and also plenty of discipline. "Which, according to my sister Hetty, is what I very much need. Dr. Armazet's regard for my father seems to have been greater than his distrust of a rolling stone. He was good enough to write that he thought I must have inherited some qualities. Now I must prove that I have."

Rosamond glanced at him with sudden new interest. She had often heard him express dogged determination — she had been in the habit of hearing him express it — but never before, as she would have said, about a matter so well worth while! And there was a ring of contentment, too, in his voice as he stated his purpose.

They lunched, and then they went driving in the Bois, and had tea at the Pré Catelan. Now that he was no longer pursuing her, no longer sang but one many-cadenced song, she began to find him more interesting than she had ever hitherto supposed him; in the easy intercourse of the afternoon he revealed unconsciously a maturity which seemed to her strangely new. He was

George Brandon, and yet he was not George Brandon; and she was led to the wistful reflection that not until after a man ceases to love a girl too consumingly is she likely to see him in his full stature. Graham had never loved her quite as George had done; he had always been able to reserve a due share of his attention for his business and his regular diversions; and she had admired the strength and poise of such a nature. Now she found herself for the first time in her life a little in awe of George. It was an incredible feeling for her to have in his presence; yet at moments some shrewd utterance that showed a deeper insight than she had ever attributed to him, some hardly to be defined indication of an adequacy to situations which she had never dreamed that he could attain, struck her with astonishment and awakened in her that feeling which she would not have believed he could inspire. To find the old friend and comrade and also to discover an interesting and unsuspected personality was fascinating; driving back to her hotel she could not put out of her mind a sense of sadness that there was to be but one more day of this companionship.

The thought of the lonely dinner, the lonely evening that awaited her, presented itself. She shrank from it — not so much from the loneliness as from the thoughts that she knew would surely come to her with loneliness. As they drove up to the hotel, she said with sudden appeal, "George, won't you dine with me to-night?"

"With you?" he said, hesitating.

"Yes. I shall be alone. I — I don't know why I did n't tell you at first. Graham has gone to Poitiers to see the army maneuvers. He won't be back to-night. It

will be so lonely dining in the hotel — unless you will come."

"Of course I'll come — how sweet of you to ask me! But I don't understand — left here all alone —"

The sentence though incomplete was charged with disapproval.

"Oh, you see, I was with the Vasmers — But here we are; I'll tell you about it this evening. I've had a splendid day, George. And I shall look for you at seven."

George drove on to his hotel in a puzzled frame of mind. It had struck him as odd that throughout the day she seemed to be evading reference to her husband. He had attributed it to a kind forbearance. Now he wondered if there might be another cause of her reticence — if she and Graham were at odds.

At dinner, Rosamond, leaning forward and looking at George with a mischievous happy light in her hazel eyes, did not look like a grieving wife. Listening to her voice, watching her lovely lips, glancing at the smooth white neck and shoulders above the white-and-green of her dress, George felt the old fascination stealing over him and surrendered to it willingly. "How I should like to be sitting opposite you like this every night!" he exclaimed.

"I wish that you might be, for about a week," she answered.

"Has your husband left you alone for a week?"

"It was a great opportunity that presented itself. A French officer whom he knew in Cuba is chaperoning him; he will see everything. And he left me with the Vasmers. That very day they were summoned to London. I knew

that Graham would hurry back to me if he knew — so I have n't told him that I'm alone."

"Why not? Do you enjoy being alone?"

"No; it's perfectly horrid."

"It is n't right to leave your husband in ignorance. You say that he would come to you at once; you should let him."

"You don't understand his interest in these military matters. He was so delighted to have this chance to study the French tactics. I don't want him to be disappointed."

George was silent. He felt that such a breach in the honeymoon justified his suspicion of the husband's selfishness. He suggested that they might go to some theater. Rosamond said that she would rather sit with him and talk. So they had their coffee in the courtyard, between the palms and the cool plashing fountain. While they talked, the sultriness of the evening grew heavier; presently there was a lightning flash and thunder rolled in the distance; then came the first drops of rain. They retreated to the arcade; the rain poured down in a sudden deluge on palms and gravel walks, trampled with tiny feet on the roofs, and gushed with an eager gurgling from the pipes; the little fountain could no longer be heard. Overhead rioted the lightning and thunder in their full fury; the electric lights of the court and of the arcade dwindled to a dim redness; within the hotel lamps and candles began to twinkle. Lightning smeared the interior of the court and vanished in a thunder crash again and again and again.

"Would you feel safer inside?" George asked.

"I don't want to go inside," Rosamond answered. "Yet a thunderstorm does terrify me; I always feel as if I wanted to cling to some one."

It was innocently said; and the next flash revealed her with one hand nervously raised to her throat, the other clasping hard the arm of her chair. With a sudden impulse of protection George reached out and covered that hand with his. Dear little hand, so soft and firm and warm, so yielding and gentle — like the girl herself! He had never before held it so, and she did not withdraw it from his grasp. They sat together silent, while rain and lightning and thunder stormed before them.

Then as suddenly as it had come, the rain slackened, the thunder rolled off into the distance. The mild and unperturbed little fountain was again tinkling; cool odors pervaded the court; Rosamond withdrew her hand.

"I'm silly to be afraid," she said. "I have always been so in thunderstorms."

"I liked having you afraid."

There was an awkward silence; each felt that the other hovered on the brink of speech. Rosamond knew that she had regained all her sovereignty. His hand had quivered when it closed on hers; she knew the pressure of eagerness and trembling love. So for a few weeks had her husband often pressed her hand; lately when he had been in an affectionate mood, he had smoothed and stroked it with the flaccid contentment of accustomed possession. She knew how bitterly she rebelled against such unexcited appropriation of her person, how much it meant to her to feel that she could impart a wilder impulse to a lover's

heart. And George Brandon felt that she was drawing him whither he did not know and did not care; he loved her, and her husband neglected her; let fate take its course.

"Ah," she said, "you go back to America to-morrow!"

"Do you wish me to stay?"

"I could n't urge that. But this day has been so pleasant! And I had thought it would be so dreary!"

"Look up!"

The crescent moon had swum out placidly from the broken clouds. The water dripping more leisurely from the eaves had now a placid sound — as placid as that of the unperturbed fountain.

"Look up at that moon," said George. "And think a moment — and then tell me what you would have me do."

She raised her eyes, and he possessed himself again of her hand; she yielded it to his pressure. But when she looked round at him, she withdrew it.

"I'll stay if you want me," he said.

"I should n't ask it — and you've made all your engagements."

"They're easily canceled."

"It would n't do to cancel that with Dr. Armazet."

"No doubt he would give me a week's grace."

"Do you think he would? Oh, I'm so selfish! I do want you to stay. We could have such a good time."

"I will cable to Dr. Armazet in the morning," said George. "It will be splendid to have a week with you — all to myself."

Tingling and thrilling still from the touch of her soft

hand, from the music of her voice, from the confession of her eagerness and her dependence, he could not look beyond the seven bright days.

But during his walk back to his hotel late that evening, he underwent a reaction of mood. Sanity returned to him. He was by no means sure that Dr. Armazet would hold a place open that had been bestowed with some distrust of the applicant's stability. Indeed, Rosamond's willingness that George should make for her pleasure what must in any event be a considerable sacrifice rendered the sacrifice already burdensome. In a foolishly romantic moment he had offered it; ah, but she should have had strength enough to decline it. Just that she might be amused for a week, she was lightly letting him imperil his one great chance for a career.

She, poor girl, was weak, no doubt, yet she had consented to his suggestion from less trivial motives than he had thought. He was the man who had loved her longest and most constantly, whom from her young girlhood she had vaguely supposed she might some day marry, and on whom, in a time of aberration, she had forever closed the door. He united her with what had been sweet and winning in her past; she had treated him cruelly and he loved her still! He offered her a week of happiness such as perhaps she might never again know, and she accepted it, not lightly, but with an eager and wistful heart.

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CHAPTER XI

THE BEGINNING OF AN EXCURSION

ROSAMOND found that she had embarked upon a course that required her to deceive her husband. She had promised to write him daily letters. Now that she had George with her each day she did not wish to hasten Graham's return; and she was sure that she would if she informed him of her situation. If she did not write at all, Graham would probably be telegraphing to find out the reason for her silence; he might even come posting to Paris. So she wrote to him every evening, even as she had promised, without ever mentioning George's name or the fact that the Vasmers had gone to London. "Tuesday we went to Fontainebleau," she wrote — knowing how he would interpret the word "we." By using it consistently in all her letters and never bringing in a name, she was able to give an accurate and at the same time misleading record of her movements. Doing this, she sank in her own estimation; for very shame she could not bring herself to read over one of the letters that she thus equivocally indited. She was fully determined to free her conscience as soon as Graham came back; she would explain to him why she had chosen to deceive him; that she had not wished to interrupt his interesting military observations. After all, her course was fundamentally innocent and harmless even if superficially culpable; she did not apprehend any difficulty in demonstrating this to Graham.

Fontainebleau and Versailles and Meudon, drives through the Bois, and pleasant loiterings — so the days slipped by. If Graham and the time of reckoning had not lurked in the background, these would have been for Rosamond very delightful days. For George, too, if Graham had not been an existing and, even though absent, an obtrusive fact, these would have been delightful days. The compunctions that he had felt over the possible sacrifice of an auspicious professional opportunity soon vanished. The situation in which he found himself was baffling and bewildering, but it was exciting. This young bride, deserted and neglected on her honeymoon, had fallen under his protection — and had more nearly fallen in love with him than ever before. Why had she married Rappallo? George could swear to himself that she was regretting it. Why had she married Rappallo? Only because, like so many other young girls, she did not know herself, and had followed the sudden and subtle promptings of an excited moment instead of the calm guidance that she might have derived from a contemplation of the faithful years. And he found that he was faithful to her still; there was no one else in all the world who could have such power of enchantment over him. Every evening she had to dismiss him, he lingered so abidingly. "Now you must say good-night; I must get at my letters." And then she would add, "But do come early to-morrow, so that we can have a good long day together." She was always gay and high-spirited; vapors fled before her sunny laughter: "Play with me and I'm happy; play with me and be happy," said her merry cordial eyes. She fascinated and en-

chanted and inflamed him. It seemed to him that she had gladly forgotten all about her husband, was packing the days as full as possible in order the more completely to forget.

The day of their excursion to Chantilly, the fifth day of their week, a telegram was put into George's hand as he was leaving his hotel. It conveyed Dr. Armazet's announcement that he would be unable to hold the position open for Dr. Brandon.

George reddened as if he had been struck across the eyes. Mad rebellion flamed in him. The gate to an honorable career was closed; he was cut off from his opportunity to lead a life of usefulness—but there was one person whom he still might live to serve. Let her but turn rebel with him; she loved him now; let her but take the step; was not love that, looking before leaping, still chose to leap, the noblest, greatest love? How they could cherish each other for such glorious defiance! They need never return to America; in Europe they could be sufficient to themselves. He cast the fragments of Dr. Armazet's message over the parapet of the bridge to float away down the Seine.

Passing up the Rue de la Paix, he glanced at the jewelers' windows with an aroused interest. What a pleasure to bestow decorations on Rosamond, to have her receive them from his hand! A heart-shaped aquamarine pendant took his eye; if ever he might give her presents, that should be the first; he could see it lying cool against the soft whiteness of her neck. He entered the shop and asked the price of it; he examined it and put it down reluctantly. Of course she would not accept jewelry

from him. But no sooner was he outside the shop than he was again possessed with the desire to offer her this tribute.

Looking at his watch, he decided that he had just time; he drove to his banker's. When he arrived at Rosamond's hotel five minutes later than the appointed hour, the pendant was in his pocket, and his heart was beating spiritedly.

She came down to him, smiling and gay in her blue linen suit and hat bright with nodding cornflowers. "What a fine spree we'll have!" she said. "I feel excited at going to a new place — a regular journey!"

"I feel excited, too," he replied boldly. "This week is making me appreciate more than ever what a honeymoon with you might have been."

"Ah, then we have been much too nice to each other!" she said. "But let's not cloud the day with any unhappy thoughts."

He saw that he had alarmed her, put her on her guard; his stupidity and her quickness to take the defensive alike galled him. And in that condition of mind, the disappointment that he had just sustained through Dr. Armazet's cable asserted itself more keenly; he could not long pretend to himself that he did not care. Soreness at the loss of the opportunity that had made him, until this unlucky week, cheerful and happy, grew and spread within him during the journey to Chantilly; he sat silent, dwelling on his folly and his fate; he exerted himself but little to entertain his companion. And she had brought this disaster on him, quite wantonly; but she should never know.

"You're not being very nice to me this morning, George."

"I thought from what you said some time ago that you did n't want me to be."

"But I do, really. I love it."

"That means you love me."

"Oh!" She shrank back into the corner of her seat and looked at him with startled eyes. "Have I done anything that gives you an excuse to say that?"

"My dear Rosamond, why should I not say it? There were times before you were married when I felt that you really loved me a little, even though you persistently denied it — times when I knew that if you would only give yourself to me you would soon love me with all your heart. Now you have had your experience of marriage with another man — and you love me now more than you ever did before!"

"No, no!" she cried desperately. "I don't, I'm sure I don't! And — and you must n't put such ideas into my head; it's wrong of you to talk to me so."

Shrinking in her corner she looked at him frightened and appealing. His chivalry was touched.

"It would be if I did n't believe that I could offer you greater happiness," he said.

"You are inviting me to desert my husband!"

"Who seems already to have deserted you!"

"He had left me with friends; I urged him to go. You misunderstand very much, George, if you think my husband is unkind to me."

"Not unkind, no. But his love for you was n't the real thing, any more than your love for him. And now you

both realize it. He's glad to get away, you're both glad and hurt to be left. And you've made me feel that you've had more companionship with me in the five days I've been here than you've had with your husband in your whole honeymoon."

"It's easier to be companionable with a person for five days than for two months. Especially when you're not seeing anybody else at all. Two months from now I'm sure that you and I should each of us be glad of a little vacation."

"Then you tell me that I'm quite mistaken, and that you are as a matter of fact entirely devoted to your husband and care nothing about me?"

"That's the way I mean it to be," she answered firmly.

"We mean so many things that we can't bring to pass! I meant to put you out of my life entirely — and here I am suggesting that you remodel it for me! You meant to adore your husband with an increasing devotion — and two months after marriage you are tired of him, bored by him, annoyed with him — and he is reveling in an opportunity to escape from you! No, I can't see it, Rosamond. That romance is played out, never to be revived; you have the husk of it left, the memory to contrast with the reality and to make each day more bitter than the last — a chafing toleration for each other at best instead of freer confidence and quicker understanding. You and he for life on opposite sides of the table, or you and I for life there — if you could make the choice now, Rosamond, which should you choose?"

"I don't know," she answered. "Sometimes I should

like one and sometimes the other. I'm two persons, I think. And that's all I want to say about this subject. You make me feel very disloyal to Graham, when I'm not really. I don't like you so well when you try to disparage him. I'm very glad I'm married to him — very glad, indeed. And I wish I were with him now."

She no longer was shrinking back in her corner. She sat up straight and looked out of the window, and a little spot of angry color glowed on each cheek.

"Yes," said George. "And when you are with him and I am somewhere else, you will be wishing that you were with me. And wherever I am, I shall be wishing that — more than you can ever do."

The sincerity of the speech softened her. She turned to him and said, "I've made you unhappy, George, and I'm sorry. I think of all those pleasant days when you were courting me — how sweet they were! I feel that something should have come from them — I feel almost guilty because I did n't marry you. And, on the other hand, when I think of Graham's courting, I know that I could n't have done otherwise than I did. There is associated with that a holiness that is simply inexpressible. It is the thing that makes me wonder how any woman can ever marry more than once."

"You would sacrifice your whole life on the altar of a memory!"

"If it were necessary. But you don't understand, George. I love Graham. I can't help loving you, too, — a little, — but I love Graham. You must n't lose sight of that."

George looked at her steadily. "And these last days

have made me perfectly sure that you love me. You may not be ready to admit it now; but you will know it when I am gone and you are once more with Graham."

She did not make a reply. The train drew into Chantilly.

CHAPTER XII

THE END OF AN EXCURSION

THE Pelouse that morning presented a lively appearance. It was only two weeks before the autumn races; the jockeys in their colors were exercising the horses; the men and women of the English colony sat in the grand stand or strolled upon the oval. There was an air of serious, even momentous preparation and of observant scrutiny; if a groom ran his hand down over a horse's leg or if a rider stroked his beast's mane, the act seemed neither casual nor affectionate, but an item in the formula of training.

Rosamond and George paused on their way to the château and looked on at the proceedings.

"I wish Graham might ride in the races," said Rosamond, as they moved away. "That is what I should like to see. He rides better than any one else that I ever saw."

"I have heard that it was his appearance on horseback that first captivated you," remarked George.

"Gossip was accurate for once. The first time I saw him was at a rough-riding drill. Grace, gallantry, daring, control — was it any wonder if a girl noticed him?"

"There is no doubt that he is a good horseman."

They walked on in a stiff silence. George smarted under a sense of rebuff. He felt that she was trying to keep alive a sentiment for her husband by unfair means.

To dwell on those intoxicating moments of first love was to deny reason a hearing.

But George could not long be sullen, least of all in Rosamond's company and in such surroundings. No sooner had they passed through the great gate of the castle grounds than his spirits began to assert themselves buoyantly. His lively comments in the picture gallery drew from her replies of an equal gayety; his enthusiasm and his prejudices made him a good companion. What was especially pleasant to Rosamond was his leisureliness; he seemed not in a hurry to proceed from one room to another; even more than she he seemed to linger before the old canvases, and lingering to receive impressions. And now she found that what she had once condemned in him as a tendency towards irresponsible and feminine dawdling was an interesting and attractive characteristic.

"You are a good person to go through a museum with," she said.

"And you are a good person to go anywhere with," he replied.

Such remarks as that pleased her. So, watching her, he continued, "There's no doubt about it; if you are n't bored or annoyed by a person in a picture gallery, you probably won't be bored or annoyed by him anywhere else. And conversely. The dismayed couples who have arrived at an understanding of each other in the picture galleries of Europe! Have n't you seen them?"

"Oh, yes," Rosamond answered. "I've seen them." ("*Seen* them!" thought George to himself, underscoring the verb.) "But," she went on after a moment, "it's

easy to imagine too much. People who get married usually do it on some basis of knowledge of each other. Probably unpleasant little surprises do occur; but if they're sensible they fall back on what drew them together in the first place; they're very foolish if they let small differences in taste drive them apart."

"It is n't always a matter of letting themselves be driven apart. Sometimes it's a matter of pretending that they have n't been when they know they have. And it's always a question whether it's worth anybody's while to lead a life of pretense."

They proceeded through the gallery rather soberly. George felt that he had made an impression upon her; in her eyes he caught the troubled look of uncertainty. He asked himself if he were playing the part of a cad; it was a perplexing question. The seduction of a woman had always seemed to him the basest of all a gentleman's amusements; could it be that he was now engaged in an attempt to practice it? No, for what made seduction base was the levity, the inconstancy, the cold-hearted selfishness associated with it, and he was guilty of none of those vices. If Rosamond had been happy with her husband, he would never have tried to detach her. Since she was not happy, was it not right that he who loved her should try to make her happy? And for happiness a woman's first requirement was to be loved. But could that compensate her for the possible loss of friends, for the grief and mortification of her family, for her disgrace in the eyes of the world, for expatriation and isolation? With such odds against him, how could he hope to bestow happiness upon her? And if he could

not hope to do that and yet strove to win her away from her husband, was he not, indeed, an execrable cad?

The question impaled him, but he wriggled himself free from it. Whatever course he followed, unhappiness for her, so long as she remained united with her husband, was inevitable. Rappallo neglected her, and she was not a woman who could endure neglect. There would in time be separation, humiliation, and probably divorce. She would be a woman disillusioned and embittered — all the more if the man who might have saved her chose instead the part of conventional and cowardly virtue.

And the thing could be managed. A high-spirited girl, abandoned by her husband on their honeymoon, would not be without sympathy and support if she declined to return to him. Divorce would follow; then the true lover could claim his own.

The thoughts formulated themselves slowly in the intervals between comments on pictures, exclamations over gems. When George saw Rosamond poring with such interest and delight over the jewelry of the Condés, he bethought him hopefully of the small case in his pocket. He felt that she would be pleased; he had a desire always to please her.

They drove back to the hotel opposite the race-course for luncheon. There was some discussion about the train they should take returning to Paris. There was one at three o'clock, another at five, and another at nine. George rejected the idea of taking one of the earlier trains. He proposed that they drive about the country,

go to Senlis and see the Cathedral, and take the evening train from there.

"But it gets to Paris so late," protested Rosamond.

"Well, why not?" Then he drew out his little packet and laid it on the table. "I bought you a wedding present this morning; here it is."

"Oh, George, you did n't! How nice you are to me!" She drew the packet towards her and looked at him with sparkling eyes. "What can it be? I can't guess. Shall I open it now — right now?"

"As you please," said George; "it's nothing very exciting."

She delayed about opening it, tantalizing herself with guesses. They were all tactfully modest guesses; George smiled benignantly.

"Then it's a little enamel box," she declared with an air of assurance. "One of those sweet little things with Cupids on the cover. Or else it's — no, I can't guess what it is; I must open it at once."

When the aquamarine lay revealed, she gave an exclamation of delight, and then immediately one of uncertainty. "How lovely! How perfectly lovely! But, oh, George! I — I don't think I ought to accept such a wonderful gift — do you?"

"I should n't have given it if I had thought that."

"You were so sweet to get it for me. And it's beautiful; it's enchanting. But jewelry — I don't feel as if I ought — Graham might feel — please forgive me, but it's almost too personal a kind of present; is n't it, George?"

"That's exactly why I got it. I wanted to give you

something for yourself — something that could n't possibly be for Graham, too."

"How lovely it is!" She held it so that a ray of sunlight fell on it through the window; she placed it against her bosom and looked down at it with captivated eyes. "I wish Graham were n't so conventional. I know he 'll think I ought n't to accept such a gift from any man but himself."

"The tyranny of Graham!" said George.

"He really won't object when he finds it gives me pleasure." She slipped the chain round her neck and fastened it, and caressed the stone with her fingers.

And soon it was settled that they should not take either the three o'clock or the five o'clock train back to Paris, but that they should drive to Senlis.

Rosamond was still too excited about her new possession to be much interested in anything else. During the drive she toyed with it and smiled on it, caught the light with it and exclaimed with pleasure over it. George remembered that whenever in the past he had made her little presents of flowers her delight had been similarly expressive and encouraging. And there was no insincerity about it; she was absorbed in pleased contemplation and in happy gratitude. That she was in such simple ways so unspoiled a child touched George; indeed, her blithe immaturity was to him not only appealing but enchanting. It made him the more eager to tempt her, even while he knew that it made his responsibility the greater.

"You flatter me, seeming to like my little present," he said, laughing as she fondled it.

"I love it. I've always wanted just such a large beautiful aquamarine. Graham doesn't care much about stones or jewelry," she added somewhat wistfully.

"Rosamond," said George suddenly, "listen. Give me your hand a moment — just a moment; don't be reluctant — there. Do you remember how you let me take it during the thunderstorm? You turned to me then as if for protection; you don't know what a sweet, uplifted feeling that gave me. You don't know how lovingly the sensation of this little hand lying in mine has lingered in my memory, how much it means to me that once it lay in mine. Without you, nothing seems worth striving for; with you, it would be such happiness to work!"

"But, George, you mustn't talk like this." She pulled her hand away resolutely. "You must face facts, and be a man."

"Because I am a man and love you, I say this. You know I love you as no other man ever did or does or can. And you have made me feel in this past week that you love me. Have you the courage to face that fact?"

"I must deny that it is a fact."

"It will, of course, be the last thing that your lips will acknowledge. But do actions have no meaning?"

"What actions of mine could be so misconstrued?"

"All of them — since the day we met by the Institut. You've been as dependent on seeing me, on being with me, in these days, as I have been dependent on being with you. If it were not so, you would hardly have urged me to stay at the risk of losing my appointment —"

"You did not give me to understand that there was any risk," she said sharply; and he bit his lip at the indiscretion into which his excitement had hurried him. She looked at him gravely for a moment and then asked, "Do you mean that you have lost your appointment?"

"Oh, you must n't catch me up so!" he protested laughingly; but he did not dare to attempt equivocation under her steady eyes. "Well, yes," he acknowledged, "I have lost it. But that does n't make any difference really." He was alarmed by the expression of shock and suffering on her face. "There are plenty of appointments everywhere for a man who — why, in Paris for instance; the American doctors in Paris — there 's no better opening for a man of the right sort. We could live in Paris, Rosamond, and —"

"Oh, you make me ashamed!" she cried under her breath. "Stop!"

His cheeks flamed as red as hers.

In front the driver, who understood no English, turned and besought their admiration of the arched viaduct over the Nonette, now rising into view. The unresponsiveness of his passengers caused him to settle back in his seat stolidly. Monsieur and Madame were having a quarrel; ah, well, thank the good God, a quarrel with his wife seldom affected an American's liberality.

"I see it all now," Rosamond said coldly. "When you had lost your own future, then you decided that you would also try to sacrifice me."

"Rosamond!" he cried in reproach. "To make such a charge as that — against me who have loved you for so long!"

Yet her words caused him deep humiliation, for he knew in his heart that they were a bitter statement of the truth.

"I have injured you, and you have revenged yourself upon me," continued Rosamond implacably. She leaned forward and addressed the driver, bidding him turn back to Chantilly.

He obeyed the order in surprise; meanwhile George took out his watch.

"It is of no use," he suggested mildly. "You see — already we have lost the train. We might as well go on to Senlis; we can get no earlier train."

"Oh, very well," she said. "But this is intolerable."

George leaned forward and told the driver to turn back to Senlis. He obeyed impassively; eh, but this was a quarrel, indeed! Would Monsieur and Madame keep him turning about and about in the middle of the road?

"It is not like you to be unfair to any one, Rosamond," said George. "I have loved you long and faithfully, and I claim the right to be heard. You dismissed me again and again in my courtship, yet each time, as it seemed to me, with a decreasing assurance. And so, when you sent me away last winter, I entertained the hope that I would return to find you had at last realized that I was as indispensable to your happiness as you were to mine. Instead of that you took advantage of my absence to imagine yourself suddenly, violently, impetuously in love with a sudden, violent, and impetuous suitor. The friendship and the courtship of years could not stand beside the romance of a month; love should be exciting,

marriage should be dramatic — and so I came home just in time to see you married. Now, three months later, we meet, and I learn certain things. The romance of a month is over, and you are experiencing the chagrin of the greatest mistake that man or woman can make; you know already the misery of a mismating, and you are facing a future which holds no romance and no idealism. And your husband has left you on your honeymoon in order to pursue undisturbed his singular avocation. From that fact I conclude — I do not speak with intentional cruelty — that his marriage is exactly as satisfactory to him as yours is to you. Only, a satisfactory and happy marriage is less important to a man than to a woman; your husband's selfishness will increase, and his cheerfulness will not grow perceptibly less. But a woman is of the sex that sacrifices and suffers; and for a man whom you no longer love you will perform services that are no longer joy, and you will weep in secret and smile before his face. Marriage for a woman is always a martyrdom, but it may be a martyrdom that puts the light of heaven always in her eyes, or one that reveals only the torture of her soul. Already you have betrayed to me which kind you are enduring; come to me, Rosamond, and God help me — sometimes at least the light of heaven shall shine!"

"Never. Not even if I loved you with my whole heart. The thing is unthinkable."

"I confess," said George, "that when there are no children I cannot regard the married state as so sacred — so inescapable —"

"I do not wish to escape from it. Do you not under-

stand? If a woman cannot go to a man with joy, she had better not go to him at all."

"And you are very sure, Rosamond, that you could never come to me joyfully — not if we waited apart, you in America, I in Paris — ; no, let me put it this way; suppose that when at last you were free and I went joyfully to you, would you not welcome me?"

"George," she said, "I will not allow you to talk any more about my freeing myself from my husband. I realize that I have done very wrong in showing such pleasure — in feeling such pleasure — in your society; fortunately it will never again be possible for me to commit this wrong. The understanding at which we have arrived this afternoon is complete. I have let you assume that I do not love my husband; I mean to atone for my disloyalty. I love him the more because he is not the sort of man who is forever wooing my love, because he has wider interests and grows restless in inactivity. And I care much less for you because you have tried to take advantage of my flightiness and my folly, instead of protecting me against my foolish self."

"Your foolish self! Your real self, your adorable self, not this puritanical, conventional, hypocritical self!"

She kept a disdainful silence, and the next moment he was supplicating her again. "Good Heavens, Rosamond, I don't mean to be abusive. Overlook my language — for the sake of my love!"

But to his whimsical smile which she usually found attractive, she presented an uncompromising visage.

"Whatever justification you may have had for thinking that such speeches are agreeable to me, it

exists no longer. It must be clear to you that my husband's love is the only love that I desire or that I will accept."

"Very well," said George, "I leave Paris in the morning."

The matter being thus settled, they drove on in silence. By the time that they reached Senlis, George had apparently regained his customary spirits and his eye for happenings along the road. At the Cathedral he dismissed the carriage; the coachman departed rejoicing that Monsieur and Madame had effected a reconciliation. With a seemingly unabated interest George led Rosamond from point to point, calling on her to admire the tower and to smile at the ornamentations of the portals, conducted her on an exploration of the narrow, winding streets of the little town, and showed an antiquarian's zeal in discovering ancient Roman and early Merovingian remains. She strove not to be behind him in spirit, even while undecided whether to admire or despise such resiliency as he displayed.

They dined cheerfully in a little hotel, and took the nine o'clock train back to Paris. George had become again the same pleasant companion that he had always been. He seemed to have reëntered contentedly the old cage of good-fellowship after his unsuccessful effort to reach a more tempting perch. Only when they were driving up to Rosamond's hotel did he say, —

"This ends it then, Rosamond?"

"Ends what?" she asked bluntly.

"My romance."

"That has a ring of sentimentality. Come, George,

take me into the hotel; we'll shake hands and part—and meet again — friends."

At the foot of the staircase, where he was to leave her, they encountered Graham Rappallo. Instant joyfulness swept agitation from Graham's countenance.

"Thank the Lord, Rosamond!" he cried. "I've been frightfully worried about you!" He nodded to George, and continued, "I got back at noon, and I've simply been watching the door all day. I found I could n't stay away from you any longer."

"Oh, poor Graham! Oh, I should have been at the station to meet you!"

George, waiting impatiently to take his departure, viewed these affectionate greetings with cynical eyes.

"I never should have stayed away if I had known you were all alone," proceeded Graham. "Why did n't you tell me about the Vasmers? I found a telegram for you from Dorothy — too bad. Her father died last night."

"Oh!" Rosamond cried out in pain. "And I should have gone to her at once! She and her poor mother — all alone! Telegraph now, Graham, — say that we'll start from Paris in the morning."

Graham hesitated. "Are you sure that they'll want us? There probably won't be anything we can do —"

"I'm going to London in the morning," George said. "I'll telegraph Miss Vasmer and offer my services."

"That's first-rate," Graham replied. "Probably you'll find all arrangements made, but it will no doubt be a comfort to them to feel that you are at hand ready to help. Under the circumstances, since Dr. Brandon

will be there, I don't think you need feel that you must go, Rosamond."

"But I do feel it!" Rosamond exclaimed, distress sharpening her voice. "I will telegraph to her now; and, Graham, you arrange about our starting first thing in the morning."

"Very likely, then, I shall see you again," said George. "If not, good-bye."

"Good-bye." She took his hand for a moment, yet hardly glanced at him. "Oh, poor Dorothy!"

She moved away to send her telegram, her husband went to make inquiries about trains, and George, in a somewhat bitter and disillusioned frame of mind, passed out into the street.

"She does n't really care for her husband, that's certain," he thought. "And she does n't seem to care for me. I believe the only affection she's capable of is for persons of her own sex."

But he did not really believe it; he found that in his heart he could not disparage her, however much he tried.

CHAPTER XIII

THE AQUAMARINE PENDANT

WHEN Graham came up to his room after making the desired inquiries, he found Rosamond already preparing for departure. Excitement and agitation had aggravated a certain native disorderliness; trunk-trays and open bags lay scattered about the floor, clothes were strewn upon the beds and heaped upon sofa and chairs, and Rosamond moved about, snatching and tossing with a rapid hand.

"I telegraphed we would come by the first train in the morning," she said. "When is it, Graham?"

"Seven o'clock; we'll arrive in London at five. There's another at nine that will get us in only a few hours later; we'd better take that —"

"No, no. I feel that I must get to Dorothy at the first possible moment."

Graham had been in the saddle for two nights. He did not mention this, but he felt aggrieved, rebellious. The proceeding seemed to him thoroughly irrational and unnecessary.

"Really," he said, "I don't see the need of such haste. We shall have to be up half the night packing; much better to do the thing at leisure and take the nine o'clock train."

"You've been away, Graham, pursuing your own pleasure; it seems to me that you might do this first

thing that I ask. If you can't understand why I feel that I must get to Dorothy at once —"

"Oh, all right, my dear; since you've so set your heart on it —"

Graham, with a pretence at cheerfulness, began to pack. He passed and repassed close beside Rosamond; she seemed more than ordinarily unconscious of his presence, indifferent to it. In reality she was wishing that he would stoop and kiss her, ever so casually, as he passed. When he failed to do this, she thought bitterly that not so long ago he could not resist bestowing on her such tokens of affection. She was aware that she had turned her cheek invitingly and that he had ignored the opportunity. The privilege that he had won, he no longer prized; doubtless it was the way with men. Doubtless it would have been so with George. Yet she must be fair to George. He had been faithful and constant year in, year out, through all rebuffs and disappointments. And Graham's capacity for loyalty she had never tested; she had given herself too readily into his hands. Whether or not there was some partial electrical communication of her thoughts, Graham suddenly turned from the trunk that he had been filling, stepped quickly to her side, and gave her the kiss that she had craved. She pleased him, even startled him, by her sudden quick, responsive hug and her cry, "Oh, Graham, you love me, dear, you do love me!"

"Of course I do!" He kissed her again. "I should have come to you at once — I should n't have left you alone an hour, if I had known. Poor little girl! How long have you been here all alone?"

"I have n't been alone very much, Graham. I met George Brandon, and he and I kept each other from being lonely."

"Well, I'm very grateful to Brandon for turning up and entertaining you to-day. I suppose it was yesterday that Mrs. Vasmer and Dorothy were called to London?"

"No." Rosamond was acutely miserable; there was nothing for it but to tell the truth. "The Vasmers went away the same day you did."

"The same day! Then you've been alone here all this time, and never let me know!"

She could not be sure whether amazement or disapproval were uppermost in his thought.

"I felt that it was n't necessary. I knew how much you wanted to see the maneuvers."

"But your letters — you wrote 'we' —"

"It was to keep you from suspecting and rushing back to me —"

"You made all those expeditions by yourself?"

"No; George Brandon accompanied me."

"Oh! Then 'we' meant you and George Brandon, though I would naturally think it referred to you and the Vasmers?"

"Yes. You see, Graham, I felt there was no need of your cutting short your trip —"

"I never would have believed that you would deceive me." He stood away and looked at her with cold and doubting eyes; she shrank from this new, undreamed-of expression on his face. "Was it entirely consideration for me that kept you from telling the truth?"

"No, not entirely," she said, driven to desperation. "It was something to feel free again — free as I was before I was married."

"Was it prearranged between you and Brandon that you should meet him here in Paris?"

"No. It was a chance meeting. I felt there was no harm in our going about together."

"In short, you were enjoying my absence so well that you were in no hurry to have me return."

"Indeed, I was very, very glad to see you to-night, Graham."

Her head drooped, she felt incapable of resistance or resentment, she was very tired. To be assailed in this manner, after withstanding argument, entreaty, emotion, all day, was more than she could bear. She felt willing to say anything if only she could be released from this inquisition. Her hand unconsciously sought the blue stone lying against her breast. Her husband's eyes, following the movement, were arrested by the object.

"That pendant," he said. "I don't remember seeing that before. Is it something new?"

"George Brandon gave it to me to-day. It is his wedding present to me."

"I don't like his taste in wedding presents."

She took off the stone and tossed it on the bed. "Very well. I will return it to him."

Her submissiveness and her evident weariness touched Graham. He came to her, put his arm round her, and said gently, "Dearest, I don't mean to be harsh. We are both tired; I have hardly slept for two nights, and you look as if you had not. Our nerves are plucking at

us; we must n't go on like this. We must sleep. In the morning, dearest, we — well, we will make a fresh start."

He kissed her; she burst into tears; he stood with his arms embracing her, vainly trying to soothe her.

"I don't know why I cry," she sobbed. "I'm unhappy when you're away, Graham, and I'm unhappy when you're here. Perhaps I ought never to have married you — oh, I wonder why, why we were in such haste! We were n't suited to each other — and George Brandon — oh, I know I loved him all along — and why, why did you ever come to take me from him!"

She tore herself from his arms and flung herself face down upon the bed.

To Graham, looking down at her quivering shoulders, glancing from them to the disordered array of clothes strewn about the room, the spectacle was for the moment exasperating. "Why, indeed!" was ready to take wing from his lips, and be wafted upwards by wildly tossed arms. But he held himself tense and silent, and the black moment passed.

To angry desperation succeeded pity and tenderness, and with them a flash of imaginative understanding. "Poor tortured little heart!" he said, and seating himself beside her he stroked her shoulder. "You're a married woman, and you wish you were a girl again — so that men could pursue and you could flee! It's only in love that the pleasures of the chase are for the hunted. The sight of an old suitor has set you tingling to be off again. If only you would look up now, dearest, and see that in your husband's eyes you are forever to be wooed, forever to be won!"

"Oh, Graham, it is n't true. You don't really love me — I don't really love you. Your interests are n't mine. And since I've been seeing George again, I know that — being with you — your wife — oh, it's humiliating to me — I can't, I can't! Marriage is degradation, unless it 's with the right man."

A fresh burst of sobs followed. Graham caressed the shoulder in silence.

"Don't touch me. Please don't touch me, Graham."

He took his hand away. The aquamarine pendant that had been flung on the bed slid down and rested against Rosamond's hand. Feeling it, she clutched it and threw it from her, out upon the floor. Graham brought it back, folded it within her hand, and then held the hand tight clasped.

"I was petty to feel so about the pretty stone," he said. "I'm sorry. I think that soon you'll teach me to like jewels. I want you to wear it — I want you to wear anything you like. It was nasty of me to say what I did about Brandon's present. Unless you wear it I shall feel that you have n't forgiven me."

"Oh, what difference does it make!"

"It will make a difference to my happiness."

"How can you talk of happiness! There's nothing but misery, misery, misery. If you can be happy, how little you must care about me! I can never be happy."

"You will be when you have a child."

"Oh, it's just that about marriage that I can't bear. Not that I should dread having children; I should love to have children. But I shrink from you, Graham; yes, since seeing George again, I feel that I'm degraded, polluted—"

"Don't, don't, for God's sake!" The anguish in his voice silenced her. She looked up at him, and seeing his face contracted with pain was stricken with remorse; she caught his hand to her lips and kissed it. At once his arms were round her. "Oh, my darling, our marriage is of the spirit."

"If I could always feel it! But when I see George Brandon it comes over me that I might be sharing the life of one who cares about healing and curing people. Instead, I'm your wife."

"But the lawyer has human problems to deal with and people to help. Is n't trying to remedy injustice almost as worthy a work as trying to cure disease?"

"Is that what a lawyer does? But I had n't thought much about you as a lawyer, Graham. You see, to me you've only been a — warrior."

He laughed a little ruefully. "That's an odd conception."

"It's why I fell in love with you. So romantic, so dashing and splendidly brave as you seemed. And of course I still know that you are."

"Of course!" He pinched her ear playfully.

"Only it does n't satisfy me now the way it did. Wives of warriors are generally unhappy, are n't they — like Nelson's and Napoleon's."

"As a warrior I ought to feel flattered; as a husband I don't."

"You've been good to me always —though sometimes I feel that you don't care for me as you did."

"Ah, I'm afraid my desertion of you was a bad mistake. I thought that the circumstances justified it, that

it could n't work harm. Of course I love you always, dearest. Love when it 's of the spirit does n't grow less."

"It will if I am often so horrid. I realize that. Do you like to kill, Graham? Why do you like to study ways of doing it? It 's the contrast between that taste of yours and the work the doctor does that pains me. I can't bear to feel that my husband likes to dwell on what seems to me unworthy."

"But I don't like to kill! Why, I never shot a deer; I could n't. It was not craving to shed blood that sent me to the war. It was, I admit, a desire for adventure — more perhaps than any patriotic motive; yes, my motives were not the most worthy. But killing — if I killed anyone I don't know it; I would rather not know. Of course in war one has to try. I'm interested in the militia as a means of national defense. I believe in it. I want to see it well trained, well drilled, well officered. It develops the clerks and artisans and professional men who form it — gives them vigor and character and readiness; to improve the militia seems to me in every way a worthy study. But really and truly, Rosamond, I'm a man of peace!"

She looked at him wonderingly, saw the appeal in his gray eyes, the smile of tenderness. "Oh, I believe you are!" she said. "How else could you be so sweet to me when I'm so horrid! I'm not good enough for you, Graham, but oh, I will try to be!"

And while he clasped her to his heart she besought him, "You do love me, don't you, Graham? You don't get tired of me, do you? And you 'll always hold me tight, whatever happens — you 'll never, never let me go?"

"Oh, I promise!" He spoke it joyously into her ear.

To Graham, seeing the recovered happiness in her eyes, the episode was but one of many suggesting that every wife has from time to time to be courted and conquered. She had made again the pleasant surrender that he might frequently and at cost of disturbance and anxiety have to compel. But in this he did not read his wife aright. He was unaware that her soul had knelt to him in humility, and then had risen to follow in a new devotion.

CHAPTER XIV

MESSENGERS OF AID

IN the morning it no longer seemed to Rosamond of the first importance that they should leave Paris by the first train. Dorothy knew that they were coming and in that knowledge might have some comfort. She would probably not know, she would certainly not care, if their arrival was delayed until the evening. So Rosamond and Graham completed their preparations at leisure and took the train from the Gare du Nord at nine o'clock instead of at seven.

Rosamond wondered if George were on the train, if he had taken the earlier train, if he would really go at all. It seemed to her, on the whole, unlikely that he would feel either impulse or obligation. His acquaintance with the Vasmers was slight, his promise given the night before might easily be reconsidered, especially in view of the certainty that she and Graham would do all that could be done for the comfort of the distressed ladies. Rosamond was disposed to think that with the coming of morning George would exonerate himself from all responsibility. She felt that if this proved to be the case she could hardly blame him, and yet that she would think the less of him for it. She was not thinking very highly of him, as it was. The events that had brought her nearer to her husband's heart had repelled George from her. Without excusing herself

she condemned him. Again and again, while she was sitting in the railway carriage beside Graham, — who was incorrigibly deep in Napier! — her cheeks burned. She had heard a proposal made to her such as she had been accustomed to attribute chiefly to the realm of unhealthy plays and putrid novels. That among her friends had been a man so devoid of principle seemed as unreal a fact as that her own conduct should have provoked his sullying suggestion. He had made it, and lightning from the skies had not shriveled him; worse still, she had herself dealt no scathing stroke. It shamed her to think of, sitting by the single-minded reader; she humbled herself anew to him. She could not taste the last cup of humiliation; she could not make a free confession. Graham might, indeed, be a man of peace, but often had she heard him express the opinion that horsewhips were for scoundrels.

Then her old loyalty and her sense of generosity and justice cried out against her; the portrait of the unfortunate man was too black! She dwelt on the condoning circumstances, scourged herself with the memory that she had detained him from the work in which had been his salvation, recalled the allurements — harmless they had seemed! — that she had spread to keep him lingering; playing with fire, what wonder that she had kindled it into flame! Or why reproach fire for having the properties of its nature! The portrait had not been painted black, but it had been smudged; so also that of herself.

Perhaps she could still give George a friendly hand; perhaps they could mutually signify that the day at Chantilly had been erased from memory.

On the boat she looked for him and soon convinced herself that he had not come. Ascertaining this, she felt somewhat relieved; it would have been awkward to meet him. No doubt he had decided that his coming was unnecessary; no doubt also he had been willing to avoid encountering her. The thought that he might have had a reaction to shyness and delicacy meant a thought towards forgiveness.

It was a rough sea in the Channel, and despite the quickness of the crossing, it very nearly did for Graham. "You'll excuse me, my dear, if I don't try to talk," was his last utterance, delivered with an economy of breath; above the chrysalis of his steamer rug his face seemed to wither momently. The qualmishness of his aspect touched Rosamond; she hovered over him, cooed to him — "Oh, my dear, if you were only an invalid always, how sweet to you I should always be!" His wan smile was her reward.

Magical was the recovery upon landing, wonderful the reviving powers of the tea basket that accompanied them in the train up to London.

"I'm glad you're feeling brisk again, Graham," said Rosamond. "For of course there will be a great deal to do for Mrs. Vasmer. I wish I had thought to have you look up sailings for them —"

"I did it last night when I looked up trains," Graham answered. "The Empress sails to-morrow afternoon at five from Southampton; that's the best they can do. Then there's the Slavonia the next day sailing from Liverpool."

"How thoughtful you are, Graham! And how cross

I was!" She beamed on him; she toyed with the aquamarine pendant. He had himself fastened it round her neck that morning. "Would you truly rather not have me wear this? I'll never wear ear-rings or necklaces or rings if you'd like me better without them."

"No, no." He laughed. "We're going to tolerate each other's tastes from now on, and then perhaps sometime we shall share them. I want you to wear anything that gives you pleasure, Rosamond."

His gentleness, his tenderness somehow flung her back upon her disloyalty of the day before, and she amazed him by suddenly putting her head against his shoulder and weeping silently. To his concerned inquiries she answered only, "It's nothing, Graham. It's just that I love you — I do love you!"

It gave him great contentment to hear it, but he could not understand why the fact should make her cry. Yet the fact that she did cry appealed to his tenderness; he petted and caressed her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, realizing that the train was drawing into Charing Cross, "how my eyes will look!" She dabbed at them with her handkerchief and added, "But they would look so anyway very soon, for, of course, I shall cry when I see Dorothy."

At the hotel while Graham was engaging rooms, Rosamond sent up her name at once to Mrs. Vasmer.

"Come as soon as you can, Graham," she said, when she received the invitation to go to Mrs. Vasmer's rooms.

Dorothy alone welcomed her. "Oh, my dear, how sweet of you to come to us!" The two girls were in each

other's arms. "To know that you would come — it has helped us."

"Graham is here, too, — but I felt that I must see you first." It was Rosamond who was in tears; Dorothy, pale and wan, kept a steady lip. "Your mother, Dorothy —?"

"She is sleeping now. She is being very brave, but she had not slept — not until this afternoon. Sit here, Rosamond. Father's collapse was unexpected. We thought he was recovering; but peritonitis set in. The people here, the surgeon — every one has been kind. But we have had to decide things — and poor mother — she has n't known what to do. It is such a comfort to see you — it was such a comfort to see Dr. Brandon — so good of him to come."

"George Brandon — he is here, then?"

"He came this afternoon. He has been so kind, so helpful. Indeed, he is out now making some arrangements for us."

"When shall you be sailing?"

"To-morrow, on the Empress. There will be a service in the morning at ten o'clock in St. George's. Mother felt she could not sail until the service had been read over him — in church."

Dorothy's self-control yielded to the pressure of emotion. Her lips quivered, the tears came. Rosamond drew the sobbing girl to her breast.

A knock sounded gently at the door.

"It's Graham; I'll send him away," Rosamond said.

But Dorothy caught her wrist, held it an instant firmly while she wiped away her tears.

"No, I'm all right, Rosamond. I should like to see Graham."

She opened the door to him, took his hand and drew him into the room — showing him that she knew all that he would say and sparing him the difficult utterance. She thanked him for bringing Rosamond to her, for coming himself — "Our sorrow has broken in upon your happiness."

He spoke of his desire to be of service. She was grateful; doubtless there would be opportunity, but at present she could think of nothing. "Perhaps if you would talk with Dr. Brandon — he has very kindly taken charge —"

"Yes, certainly, that is what I shall do. And if anything occurs to you, of course you will commission me through Rosamond?"

"Indeed, yes." He bowed over her hand. "You will leave Rosamond with me for a little while?"

Rosamond sat clapsing her friend's hand. Now and then they spoke, Dorothy to tell something of her father's last days, Rosamond to murmur a question or a little word of sorrow. But for the most part they sat clinging to each other, close, in a wordless sympathy.

Presently George Brandon's eard was sent in.

"Yes, ask him to come up," said Dorothy.

When he entered, and saw Rosamond, he looked at her uncertainly; his manner was defensive. She noted it, and it made her wish to reassure him.

"You did better than we," she said; "we have just arrived."

He smiled, and she saw that his eyes had fallen on the aquamarine pendant.

"I had promised you," he said in a tone so low that only she heard.

He turned to Dorothy. "I have all the tickets — railway, steamer, everything. And the money, —" he counted it out for her, bank notes, gold pieces. "I think that everything is attended to. I saw the curate at St. George's; the rector is absent. You need have nothing on your mind, except your packing. There will be a carriage here for you at a quarter to ten to-morrow morning. Do you think of anything else?"

"No, nothing. I don't know what we should have done without your help. We can never thank you enough."

"I've done very little. If I can be of further use, please let me know, at the Burlington. I shall be very glad."

"Thank you again. Good-night, Dr. Brandon."

"Good-night, Miss Vasmer. Good-night, Rosamond."

He pressed her hand lightly and was gone. Rosamond had felt a twinge of jealousy while he talked — jealousy on behalf of Graham; she had wished that Graham had been the timely and efficient friend, that to him Dorothy's gratitude had flowed. But because George Brandon had been so prompt she felt more kindly towards him — especially since he had conveyed the intimation that to her his promptness had been due. That he had been helpful she saw; sympathetic he always was. His implied wish to make atonement could not but touch Rosamond's gentle heart.

She remained with Dorothy in the twilight until from the next room Mrs. Vasmer called. "Come to us after dinner; do!" Dorothy pleaded. "Mother will want to see you then."

So that evening Rosamond left Graham in his room to write letters and herself sat with her friends; companionship, if it could not administer consolation, at least seemed to divert their thoughts. Mrs. Vasmer looked old and broken. When finally Rosamond rose to take her departure, Mrs. Vasmer embraced her and fell to weeping. "Dear child," she said, "and you are on your wedding journey! Pray that your husband may be spared to you as long as you live!"

Graham wondered that evening at the fantastic suddenness of women. He was writing when his wife entered, and coming up behind him clung to him and cried, —

"Oh, Graham, I don't want to grow old! I don't want to grow old and have you die!"

CHAPTER XV

DEATH AND BATTLEFIELDS

THE files of empty polished oak pews reflected the sunlight that streamed through the stained-glass windows. On the altar the candles were burning redly. The verger in his black gown crossed the chancel and vanished; the door closing behind him awoke hollow echoes through the nave. These died, and again the hum of outer London pervaded the silent place. Sitting alone in one of the pews near the chancel, Rosamond and Graham waited, strangely conscious of a deepening solemnity as the hushed moments passed. Some one entered, came up the aisle, and sat down a little way behind them. Without looking round, Rosamond knew that it was George.

The loneliness, the emptiness overawed and stilled her more than the presence of troops of mourners could have done. She had a momentary sense that she and Graham and George should not be there, that they were all intruders, that there should be none but the family — to deliver up the dead to God.

From the organ rose the low, swelling notes of "Saul." Suddenly the bell was tolled, and from the outer door the curate advanced slowly up the aisle chanting, "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord."

Standing, Rosamond saw the look of eager spiritual exaltation on the young curate's face — a look that

seemed to declare, "Death is a bridegroom — lo, the bridegroom cometh." The curate passed, and her eyes fell on the coffin, moved slowly forward on its car; a laurel wreath was its only adornment. Then, walking feebly, arm in arm, came the two sad shrouded women. Rosamond dropped her eyes. When she raised them again, the two were standing in the first pew, the clergyman had turned and was saying, "Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days; that I may be certified how long I have to live!"

Rosamond, looking at the daughter and the wife, found herself wondering how much they believed. She wondered how much she herself believed. Gazing at the rapt face of the young curate, she thought, "What happiness to be sure, like you!" A vision of herself standing there in Mrs. Vasmer's place, hearing these same words pronounced over Graham, suddenly chilled her to the heart. Oh, that could never be; it must never be! She drew closer to Graham and caught and held his hand, pressing it tight, until the end of the service.

Afterwards she knew that George Brandon, standing behind them, must have observed this. She was not sorry.

The organ pealed again the funeral march. Down the aisle the two women moved behind their dead, the eyes of each fixed upon the laurel wreath that rested above his breast. The curate stood at the chancel steps, and his look of benediction followed the departing figures. When they had passed out, he turned and left the chancel, and the music ceased.

A moment later George Brandon joined Rosamond and Graham outside the church.

"We are walking," said Graham. "Will you come with us?"

"Thank you, no. I have one or two matters to attend to now. But I shall see you this afternoon. Miss Vasmer tells me that you are going to Southampton, to see them sail." He addressed his speech to Rosamond.

"Yes. You also?"

"Oh, yes. I am sailing, too, on the Empress."

He stepped into a hansom and drove off towards Regent Street. Rosamond and Graham walked down Brook Street through Grosvenor Square to Park Lane. There shining and splendid was the world on this September morning; from the Marble Arch, gleaming and glistening in the sun, streamed the brisk and busy carriages, horses in bright harness at the unceasing trot; along the way the flower beds of the Park were gay with asters; on them and the strollers in the paths and the distant riders in the Row, on the proudly conscious horses and the proudly conscious ladies, on the green quietude of grass and trees and the restless movement of the human throng, the great houses, symbols and towers of earthly grandeur, looked down. So out into the lively, shining world, again came Rosamond, from a few moments in the presence of the unseen and eternal — out like a swimmer issuing to sun and air from a dive into the depths. She swam again upon the surface.

Yet within her mind there lingered to dispute the sovereignty of this fresh and pleasant world the vision of two sad, forlorn women, seated in a carriage with the shades drawn, and weeping in each other's arms.

There was a message for her when she and Graham

arrived at the hotel. Dorothy had written to beg her company on the train to Southampton. Would she not consent to be separated from her husband just for that short journey? Dorothy wrote that her mother joined in the appeal.

"Poor things! Do what you can for them," said Graham.

He found himself ensconced in a smoking-compartment with George Brandon. They talked together for a time, but each was aware of stiffness in himself and in the other. Graham itched to be at his Napier, George would have preferred the society of his own thoughts. And presently each was indulging his wishes.

For her friends Rosamond did her best. Mrs. Vasmer kept her self-control, seemed to listen to Rosamond's narrative of experiences and adventures, — those with George were not touched on; — once or twice even smiled. She recalled with a certain poignant pleasure episodes from her own European honeymoon. Dorothy clung to Rosamond's hand.

"I wish we could take you with us on the ship, my dear," she murmured. "For our sake, not for yours."

On board the ship Mrs. Vasmer bade Rosamond and Graham farewell in her stateroom.

"Now, go ashore and forget all about us," she said. "Thoughts of us must not make you two young people unhappy any longer."

She kissed Rosamond, gave her hand to Graham, and said good-bye. But Dorothy accompanied them to the deck and stood at the rail after they had descended the gangway. George Brandon joined her there, and when

the Empress cast off and moved away from the dock, Dorothy and George still kept sight of Rosamond and Graham in the crowd and signalled their farewells.

"Only two weeks more for us," said Graham, as he and Rosamond made their way from the wharf. "Till then, what is it to be? Back to Paris, or up to Scotland, or what?"

"What should you most like to do, Graham?"

"Well," he confessed with an ingenuous smile, "there are some mighty good battlefields in Scotland that I've never seen."

"Scotland it is, then. And I'll go over the battlefields with you. But Graham, dear, you'll try to keep me from thinking of them as scenes of dreadful carnage and death?"

"Certainly I will. I never think of them in that way," said Graham.

"How unimaginative!"

But she smiled at him and gave his arm a little loving squeeze.

CHAPTER XVI

"SUN, MOON, AND STARS FORGOT"

TO George Brandon the experience of having women dependent on him, looking to him for help and comfort, was unusual and interesting. For a few days Rosamond had been in that relation to him, and the novelty had, as he admitted to himself now, turned his head. His mother had died when he was very young; his sister had married before he had developed any sense of responsibility for her. There had been no woman for him to take care of, and there had been none to take care of him. In his hospital practice he had, of course, encountered cases that had appealed to his sympathy, but they had not been of a nature to rouse in him any deeper emotion than kindness. He had been kind to many women, devoted to only one.

Already he was ashamed of the excess to which this devotion had carried him. He had been both ridiculous and culpable. Yet she had forgiven him; he had known that when he saw her wearing his pendant and heard her thank him for coming at her friends' need. In the church the significance of the way in which she seized her husband's hand and clung to it had not escaped him. From that moment he relinquished her, even in his thoughts, without heart-burning. He knew then that when he had urged her to take the desperate step, he had been moved by a false conception of her inmost feelings.

That she was conscious of having misled him and wished to forget and to have him forget he was now well aware; the few moments that he had passed with her since the return from Chantilly had made him feel that never again could their intercourse have the freedom and intimacy of old times. It was a saddening thought — and yet a liberating thought as well.

The situation of the bereaved widow and daughter engaged his sympathy. He had been able to shield them somewhat from bruising contacts, to spare them the pain of dealing with those for whom death is a commercial opportunity and with those for whom it is an inconvenient episode. It had been with a sense that he could be still further useful to them that he had taken passage himself on the Empress. A certain chivalry compelled him to follow up the forlorn pair, deliver them safely, even at the cost of martyrdom. Had he consulted his own pleasure, he would have sailed on any steamer but the one that must from the circumstances of the case be a funeral ship. He pitied the two women too intensely to have any clear idea of them as individuals; they were objects to be served and defended.

It seemed to him that he could best fulfill his office by establishing himself as a bulwark against the intrusions of other passengers; then if the bulwark seemed not desired, it could readily be withdrawn. So he secured deck chairs for the ladies and had his own placed next to them; and in the dining-saloon he reserved a small table for three.

Having done this, he looked about for Mrs. Vasmer or Miss Vasmer, to report to them, but they did not

appear. He decided not to disturb them in their stateroom. That evening he dined solitary at his little table. At nine o'clock, when he was taking a turn about the deck, he encountered Miss Vasmer, muffled and veiled.

"I'm glad you're getting some air and exercise before turning in," he said. "Can't your mother be persuaded?"

"No; I tried. She's too tired to make an effort."

"It will do her no harm to remain quiet for a day or so and rest. But I hope that she will come up on deck. I've arranged so that our deck chairs are together — also that we have a little table to ourselves. If I'm in the way, you must be frank and say so. I thought that, at any rate, I might prevent some one else from getting in the way."

"Indeed, it's very thoughtful of you. The fact that you will be right there — I'm sure it will seem more possible to mother to appear. But you should n't sacrifice yourself in this way, Dr. Brandon. We can't be enlivening companions."

"You must have no thought of that. If you think it would be a help to have me there, then to me it will be a pleasure. If you think it would n't be a help, I shall not feel hurt."

"Of course it will be the greatest help. Mother and I need somebody besides each other. And you don't seem a stranger to us any longer. Besides, even if you had n't already done so much for us, a doctor — you can hardly know how comforting a doctor seems at times!"

She bade him good-night and passed into the cabin. George Brandon strode up and down the deck and finally stood for a time at the rail gazing off at the dark-

ness and the starry sky. The sound of the rushing leviathan beneath his feet stirred him; it sang to him of energy and enthusiasm; it gave forth the surging note of pride in work. His thoughts lifted to his future, hopefully, prayerfully; he would still make amends for the frittering away of years.

It seemed to George that the black in which Dorothy Vasmer had robed herself accentuated the warmth of color in her face, the depth of her gray eyes, the sensitiveness of her lips. He had imagined her a person of rather hard and glancing surfaces; black, like the rain cloud veiling the bright peak, limned another character. It surprised George and pleased him to find how frankly she accepted him as adviser, judge, and confidant, how ingenuous and unreserved she was from the first in communicating to him her perplexities and her distress. They met at dinner, they sat together occasionally on deck, and Dorothy told him about her father — how she and her mother had always referred even little details to him, how he had planned and advised and decided things for them — things that his daughter had been too lazy and selfish to think about and that his wife had learned to neglect through the satisfaction in always feeling so perfectly managed.

At times phrases showing where her mind kept turning escaped her, as it were unconsciously. "We both of us dread the first entering the house. Why should we dread it so — reminders of one we love!"

Her mother did not emerge from her stateroom; Dorothy was with her most of the time. On the third morning George recognized a tired look in the girl's eyes.

"I shall get your mother up on deck to-day," he said.

"I think perhaps she will come if you advise it."

"And when she comes, you will go to the stateroom and sleep."

"It's not necessary."

"But it is. You have n't been sleeping."

"The nights are hard," she confessed. "One thinks at night."

"Does n't your mother sleep?"

"Not well. She dreams and wakes crying. That rends me — and I seem to lie and listen for it."

"Poor souls!"

Her eyes filled, at the compassion in his.

He meditated on her character as he had conceived it from her reputation. She had been the least known to him of all Rosamond's friends — a dashing, reckless young woman, fond of athletics, a hard rider, enthusiastic in society, a dabbler in charities, and ruthless with the large and ever hopeful male following that was always at her command. Excitement, he had supposed, was as the breath of life to her; being himself enchained by another's enchantment, he had never felt for her more than a cool, somewhat amused admiration. She was popularly supposed to be "good fun." Qualities of sentiment and submission were the last that he would have suspected her of being willing to reveal.

Mrs. Vasmer was obedient to a doctor's orders. Once urged to the deck, once led into the dining-saloon, she accepted such excursions as part of the routine imposed on her by a physician; finding that Dr. Brandon was determined not to relax his supervision, she showed her

gratitude by growing communicative. Her husband's life had been an interesting and worthy one; her anecdotes were not tedious. Relating them while she lay in her steamer chair, her daughter on one side, George Brandon on the other, she acquired greater cheerfulness than when she recalled these and kindred episodes merely to herself in solitude. Her face brightened, and with its brightening George noticed the quick rally of vivacity to her daughter's eyes. They had often been clouded or bright with tears when she had talked with him; now there were moments when he caught from them sunny gleams.

One of these moments was when, circling the deck on the fifth morning in his regular promenade, he encountered Mrs. Vasmer and her daughter pacing arm in arm in the opposite direction. There was a morning greeting for him then that seemed to sparkle. Three times on each successive round he encountered it, the shy smile and the shining glance. On his fourth circuit it failed him; Dorothy and her mother had finished their exercise and their deck chairs were vacant. The discovery took something of the eager spirit from George's feet. The meeting and the glance — the certainty of them would have kept him treading the deck, round after round, with the persistent willingness of a squirrel in a revolving cage.

George did not attempt to deceive himself; he knew that he was falling in love. The question was whether he should now try to repress the tendency or follow it. He sat down and then stretched himself out in his deck chair to think about the matter.

He tried to test the sincerity and significance of his awakening interest by comparing his new emotions over Dorothy with those that Rosamond had inspired; and he found that he could not really proceed to any comparison. One girl he had known for years, and the other for days. He admitted that certain emotions and sentiments which only a week before he had believed consecrated to the service or the worship of Rosamond were now declaring themselves for a new mistress. "She likes me, she makes me feel that she likes being dependent on me, she makes me feel that I like having her so. Now am I being led along by vanity or am I not?" He desired an honest answer; he was still listening for it when Dorothy Vasmer came briskly by in front of him and turned on him again her disturbing smile.

"Mother's had enough, but I have n't," she explained.

And so he flung self-analysis and steamer rug aside and joined her.

The briskness and vigor of her gait did not encourage talk. It was the first time that he had been with her in this mood and it stimulated him pleasantly. He remembered now how she had used to romp at dances; not till this moment had he thought of it. Rosamond floating gracefully, smiling serenely, drifting without effort obedient to her partner's will, and this creature, flushed and eager, sweeping down the room like a Diana, — these were two contrasting pictures. And never till now had George seen the charm in the Diana.

She said to him, "I should like to get on a horse and ride and ride and ride."

Suddenly her steps flagged. She stopped by the rail

and stood looking out over the shining crested waves. When she turned, George saw that her expression had changed; her eyes were misted over.

"It was father who taught me to ride," she said. "The best rides I ever had were with him. I think I'm heartless — not to be thinking of him every moment. Sometimes I can't believe he's dead — when I feel so much alive."

"Not heartless. Oh!" he exclaimed, for she had turned from him again with her handkerchief to her eyes. "Would you rather have me go away?"

She shook her head and said after a moment, "I realize it's mean to cling to you when I'm in this depressing state."

"My dear girl, what is a friend for? I hope you count me a friend?"

"Oh, I do, one of my best and dearest. No, you have n't been a friend; you've been an angel to us."

"I like 'friend' better."

"Friend, then, — one of my best and dearest. It must be hard to be a doctor — always seeing women at their most emotional!"

She smiled at him, wistful after weeping, and he longed to take her in his arms.

The interview left him shaken, agitated by the first stirring of passion. He no longer questioned; the changing lights in her sweet eyes kindled his spirit, her lips were brave for love, her voice woke echoes in his soul. He was jealous of her every disappearance from his view. He watched her with a new intentness, of which she seemed unaware. Each sign and expression from her

of grateful dependence on him made him tremulous with delight. Best of all he felt for her true tenderness. He had helped her, he knew; he had loved to help her; always he would love to help and serve her.

And after one more day she would pass from under his dominion. The horde of romping suitors, now decorous and grave, would surround her, and to some one of them, in the new emotional susceptibility that now possessed her, she would strike her flag. On the last evening of the voyage after dinner, George asked her to walk the deck with him. They had it almost to themselves for there was a high cold wind, and clouds had blotted out moon and stars.

"Let us stand here," said George; he drew her into a corner behind a lifeboat where they were sheltered from wind and from the notice of any who might pass. Then he spoke rapidly in an unsteady voice. "Yesterday you called me one of your best and dearest friends. I want to be forever your best and dearest friend — your husband. I love you, and I have never loved doing anything as I have loved serving you."

She was silent for a moment, and in the shadow he could learn nothing from the half-averted face. Then she turned and looked at him with eyes warm in the darkness.

"And I love you."

He had not dared to hope for such immediate, such unreserved surrender; it awed him. His own soul that had debated with itself seemed shriveled and small compared with hers. It was with a shy reverence strange in him that he put his arm round her. She clapsed the

stealing hand and held it warmly; at the clasp passion flowed through him.

There by the rail they stood while the clouds parted in the sky and moon and stars swam clear. She was his with no questioning. He more than any other person in the world had supported her and her mother in their sorrow and distress. How should she not love him?

Yet to him it was so wonderful that again and again he had to be assured of the truth. She was his — with no cajoling, no coaxing, no fleeing and pursuing! And she did not doubt him. She did not require him to satisfy her that he loved her more than he had ever loved Rosamond. She believed him, she believed in him, she loved him — and oh, the gallant spirit so frank and free to recognize her mate!

CHAPTER XVII

GREETINGS FROM DR. ARMAZET

THERE was a shadow on George Brandon's happiness. He realized, that however successful in love a man might be, loving was in itself no satisfying occupation for a man. Whoever tries to make an occupation of it will only degrade love and in the end extinguish it. The reflection was an uncomfortable one. He himself was confronting idleness. No longer could he roam the world for butterflies and preserve the plausible figure of a man. The years when he should have established himself in his profession had slipped by. To wait for patients who never came, to hope for hospital appointments that were never conferred, would be a melancholy doom for his father's son. Fate had been unkind in the person of Dr. Armazet; there had been his chance! Yet, had he seized it, he would never have won Dorothy. Each month, each year that passed without his gaining foothold in his profession must mean a drain upon buoyancy and cheerfulness.

Gloomy meditations such as these his smiling eyes had to mask as he stood on deck with Dorothy and her mother while the steamer slid past the islands of Boston Harbor. All about them were returning travelers, exclaiming happily, pointing eagerly at the landmarks that meant home. But Mrs. Vasmer was silent and clung to George's arm; emotion tightened her fingers. George,

already welcomed by her with tears as a son, pressed her hand. His arm supported her when she passed down the gangway to the wharf; there her brother and his wife were waiting.

"Come this evening," Dorothy whispered to him as they parted. Already she was reluctant to have him leave her side.

When he was again in his rooms on Beacon Street, he walked through them exhilarated, yet touched with regret, too, at the thought that they would not long be his home. They had been comfortable quarters — a convenient sallying-point for a young man about town, a pleasant rallying-point for the young man's friends; the view from the windows was extensive and varied enough to divert one who was often idle. The place was one not to be abandoned lightly, without affection. Yet George felt himself uncomfortable in it; too acutely it revived the past. It had been the setting for the jewel of his love for Rosamond; in it what castles had he built, what letters had he penned! Now it was as if tainted with false sentiment. And for its part it seemed somehow to reproach him. The vows committed to paper at that table, the eager hopes that had been in his heart so often when he had smiled into his glass — had they, in spite of all the years and all the thought, taken such shallow root! Imperatrix R in the cabinet should now be Imperatrix D; after all, when love flies out of one window, it soon enters again by another. George asserted to himself, against the reproach of the mute witnesses of past emotions, that his love for Rosamond had been neither false nor shallow — and even more vehemently that his

love for Dorothy was just as fresh and fine as if his eyes had never sparkled to another girl's, as if his lips had never breathed allegiance but to her. He thought of Dorothy with tenderness. Of inconsistency in his mental view of her he was conscious. There was fascination for him in her as the unknown lady of his memory flying down a ballroom, twinkling laughter at her court; yet for the Dorothy that he knew and had won, pity rather than fascination moved in him. In sorrow, in the depths of tragic life, in the acknowledgment of dependence and the acceptance of support, charm had vanished, and spiritual sweetness, not less appealing, had been revealed. The lover was sure that in happier days the lady whose fascinating portrait brightened a chamber of memory would reappear.

Two pigeons alighted on the window ledge and engaged in amorous march and countermarch, ruffling the mottled iridescence of their necks. Their wooing ended, they took their flight over the neighboring roofs. The trees of the Common and the Garden were showing the first gold of autumn, the grass was dusty and faded, yet the few carriages that crawled up Beacon Street were significant of midsummer dullness, and the great fountain in the Frog Pond, visible from George's window, was playing to full benches. George felt that it was not for him to join the loungers, either there or at his Club. He must waste no time in seeking to place himself, and he set out to find Dr. Armazet, in the hope of receiving some useful suggestions or advice.

The surgeon was quitting his hospital when George came up to the steps.

"Ah, Brandon," he said cordially. "Glad to see you back. I'm just driving out to Brookline to visit a patient; hop in and we'll have a talk."

So George entered the waiting victoria, and as the horses started off at a rapid trot he began somewhat awkwardly. "I'm sorry, Dr. Armazet, that I failed to keep my appointment. I was unavoidably detained—" He was about to add, "I found that I could do a service to a friend," when Dr. Armazet interrupted him.

"Yes, I know." The surgeon nodded shrewdly, kindly. He was a small, spare man, with gray mutton-chop whiskers and mustache; somewhat a dandy in dress; he drove behind good horses and a liveried coachman always. "You were helping Mrs. Vasmer through her trouble; yes, I learned from her brother; she had cabled him. A fine old chap, Vasmer was, and a dear friend of mine. I am glad that you could do his family a service. If you still want a place with me, it's open to you. I sent my message in a moment of irritation; you will find I'm often irritated, irascible as the devil. But it passes—all moods pass. I have no one else; I like what I know of you — these butterfly vagaries, you can live them down; you come of good stock. I wish to know just one thing; you are in earnest now in your intention to practice this profession?"

"Absolutely. I shall go on no more butterfly expeditions."

"Certainly not. You will have no opportunity. If I find that you do good work, you will have more and more responsibility; if you don't do good work — have a cigarette." The proffer of the cigarette case nullified

the asperity of the unuttered conclusion. "The work will be wearing, and it is poorly paid — except in experience. And you will find me hard to get along with; I'm irascible as the devil."

"If you were the devil himself I should still be glad of the opportunity," said George. "It means a great deal to me. When should you like me to begin?"

"The sooner the better. To-morrow?"

"That will suit me perfectly."

"Very well, then. Report at my hospital at nine o'clock and I will get you started."

They chatted then of other things — Paris, the meeting with Mrs. Vasmer and her daughter, the record of the Boston baseball team and the prospects for the Harvard football team. And while he maintained his share of the conversation, George was thrilling with the proud joyousness that he had felt at only a few great moments of his life — as when he had made the winning touchdown in his school championship game, and again when he had captured Imperatrix R — or D — and again when Dorothy had showed him her heart. Perhaps he felt even more exultant now than when he had heard that sweet word from her lips, for now his whole sky had cleared; to the young man opportunity is even more than love.

Late that afternoon when he saw Dorothy at home, she disappointed him a little by not seeming to grasp the significance of his news.

"Why, of course, Dr. Armazet would be glad to have you for his assistant," she said. "And if he would n't others would. You'd make a success anyway — and

you won't be anybody's assistant long. You'll be having assistants of your own. It seems to me he means to get a great deal out of you and pay you very little in return."

"The chance is enough, without any question of pay," George explained. "I shall be sharing in the widest experience and the best practice in Boston."

"Well, if you're pleased," she conceded. "But it does seem to me that he ought to pay you better, he's so rich, too! And you'd make a success without his help — probably sooner!"

He liked to be assured of her confidence in him, yet he would have liked it even better if she had appreciated intelligently the advantages that the position offered him — and the good work that he must have done to justify the offer! It occurred to him that success and good work were things that she probably took for granted on the part of her friends, and that she was not accustomed to think of them as accompanied by hard work; perhaps in her eyes one grew up to them quite naturally. The idea, a not wholly comfortable one, derived some confirmation from the surroundings in which George found himself. The Vasmer house was one of luxury and magnificence. Not easily overawed by splendor, George on crossing the threshold had felt quite appalled at the consciousness that he had come into such intimate contact with what was obviously a swollen fortune. To a girl brought up in that atmosphere, success and achievement were platitudes; indeed, Mr. Vasmer had been one who carried lightly his wealth and his enterprises, and Dorothy had become imbued with the feeling that those whom she knew were an aristocracy in point, not merely

of birth, but also of ability, destined to large performance with careless ease. George remembered that the young men who had been in her train were all of conspicuous promise and distinction, that she had displayed a knack for drawing to herself youthful notabilities. All the more flattering, then, was her acceptance of him — but he must beware of striking a pose that he could not maintain. Hard work could be for him the only means to good work — but she would soon understand.

"I am to start in to-morrow," he said, "and my time will be so little my own that I can't tell how often I may have an opportunity of seeing you, Dorothy. Let us be married soon, dear."

"Soon?" she echoed doubtfully; and then she said, "Well, why should n't we? Except that it may be hard for mother."

"I shan't be taking you from her."

"We might live here. There is room for us — room for you to have an office."

He shook his head. "No. When we start out together, you must be under my wing, not I under yours. Besides, if I opened an office in a place like this, no one would take me seriously. Can we be married within a month?"

"That seems so abrupt —"

"But you won't have to undertake preparations for a big wedding."

"I always supposed I should have that," she said with a sigh. "I always wanted it."

"You would n't keep me waiting?"

"No. And really, why should n't we be married in a

month? If mother can be reconciled to it. Are you sure that you love me, George?"

He asserted it, embracing her.

"You don't know me very well."

"As well as you know me. And you do love me, don't you?"

"How could I help it? And I never loved any one before. That is what makes me sure — now."

George said, after a moment's silence, "I am sure — not for that reason."

She stopped him, putting her hand on his arm and pressing it.

"I mean never to be jealous of Rosamond — I care for her too much. She might have been yours and she chose another; I am sorry for her — that's all."

"You're a magnanimous soul, and I'm an unworthy one. But I love you, I love you, I love you."

She gave her lips and eyes to his kisses; she murmured, "Oh, it's wrong, it's wrong; I should be feeling only sorrow, and I am feeling only happiness." And then she added, as if to herself, "Father would be happy if he knew."

That brought George in spirit to his knees. "Oh, how I shall work to make you always happy!"

"Love me," she said.

"If that were all! And so what day shall we set? A month from to-day?"

"If mother consents."

He sprang to his feet. "Let's go to your mother about it now."

"No, no!" She reached up from the sofa where she

sat and caught his hand. Her eyes filled with tears; she said in a choking voice, "Mother is sitting upstairs alone, with — with father; she wished it. And I am here happy — happy!"

She turned her face from him, trying to hide her sobs.

CHAPTER XVIII

A LITTLE HOUSE IN MARLBOROUGH STREET

FROM the beginning, Dr. Armazet made George feel that he regarded him as competent for any surgical crisis. He spared no pains in preparing him for each important case. Most of Dr. Armazet's cases were important. Not only in the number of patients, but also in the territory that he covered was his surgical practice extensive. It reached out to towns and cities within a radius of sixty or seventy miles from Boston. Physicians in Newburyport, Worcester, and New Bedford frequently summoned him. Wherever he went to operate, he took George with him; George shared in the grateful glance that said, "God bless you," in the pleading look that cried, "Help me!" in the clouded gaze that spoke of hopelessness. From gloom into sunlight, and from sunlight into gloom, the transitions of the busy surgeon's life were swift and sharp. He bore them with equanimity; he told George that he had long ago suppressed imaginative tendencies to dwell morbidly or happily on the condition of those with whom he dealt. His professional creed was that life matters but little, and that nothing else matters so much. The irascibility of which he had notified George manifested itself frequently while he was operating; he swore profanely at any unfavorable discovery, cried out sharply at any awkwardness or lack of deftness on the part of nurse

or assistant, and afterwards invariably said, "If I got a bit excited, you must forgive me; I'm irascible as the devil." The nurses all adored him.

There were so many points to engage George's attention and the human interest of the work was so continuous and absorbing that when he had a slack moment he was rather disturbed to consider how absent Dorothy had been from his thoughts. Surely life without her ought not to be so satisfying; hastening to her in sudden perplexity and concern he was reassured to find that she made life rapturous. She did not reproach him for neglecting her; she showed such joy in his presence that he reproached himself. How she did love him! And how delicious it was to be so loved! "Whenever the telephone rings, I hope it's you. And I think of you every hour and wonder how soon you'll come. When we're married, George, we shall be together more, shan't we?"

He assured her of that. He explained under what pressure he had been working. She entreated him not to let Dr. Armazet make a slave of him.

He began to describe his day, to show that there was no slavery; he was proceeding into considerable detail when she stopped him: "Oh, but skip the operations, George! I really don't like to hear about such things; they make me squirm. Talk to me about just you and me."

Again he thought how delicious to be so loved! He told her that he was glad their wedding-day was only three weeks distant, absences from her were so very hard to bear. In the intoxication of her presence this really seemed the truth. She asked him if he had thought at

all about where they should live. No, he had been too much occupied.

"But why should n't we go house-hunting to-morrow? I have nothing scheduled for the afternoon. Perhaps I'd better tell Dr. Armazet at once of our plans."

She conceded this, on the condition that Dr. Armazet should be vowed to secrecy until the engagement was formally announced. And as that was to be in three days she thought that he could be trusted.

"I'm afraid we shall have a very short honeymoon; I don't know just how Dr. Armazet will view the proceeding."

"Dr. Armazet, always Dr. Armazet!" cried Dorothy. "But it's all right, I ought not to be away from mother very long just now. I will consent to the short honeymoon. Mother has been sweet about letting me go away to live with you. She would so much rather have us live here with her."

"We will try to find something close by, where she will feel that you can run in at any moment. A little house in Marlborough Street, just one block down, is for sale. We might look at that to-morrow, or would you rather live in an apartment?"

"Oh, no; a little house all our own!"

Dr. Armazet received George's announcement with gratifying enthusiasm.

"Good!" he cried. "Good, indeed! A doctor unmarried lacks his right hand. And she's a splendid girl. — Yes, I shall have to allow you a holiday for such a purpose. How much time off do you want, and when do you want it?"

George suggested ten days.

"God bless you, yes. And I'm glad you're doing this thing at the beginning. For in a year or two, I might be depending on you too much to let you get married."

It was a compliment that hit the mark. "Then he does think well of me." With this happy inference to encourage him George took Dorothy that afternoon to view the Marlborough Street house. She was delighted with it; of course it would need new wall-papers and some repairs, but it was a cozy, comfortable-looking little house. The fact that it was but a few steps from her mother's made it seem to Dorothy especially desirable. The reception-room off the front hall would serve as a consulting-room; the dining-room behind it would have to be utilized as a waiting-room during George's afternoon office-hours. — "We shall have to lunch early," said Dorothy. "But we shan't mind that." Upstairs she would have a sunny drawing-room and a tiny library. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "I think it will be adorable, George. Let's try it. Can you afford to buy it?"

"We'll see," said George, and he went that afternoon to interview the agent. The price asked seemed unreasonably high. George made an offer, and the next day was notified that it had been accepted. "I might have got it for less," he thought; "but since Dorothy is pleased with it I can't grudge the money." It occurred to him that Dorothy probably had an income of her own, and in that case the purchase of the house would not cause any constraint. If, however, there were only his resources to depend on, they would have to live economically until his practice became remunerative. But

Dorothy would not object to that. Besides, she was in mourning, and so would have little temptation to be extravagant. So George felt that he was justified in purchasing the house. He felt that he was justified in doing anything that would please Dorothy.

The announcement of the engagement made a gratifying though brief sensation; George's industry and Dorothy's seclusion were not favorable to a prolonged flutter of excitement. People wondered how it happened that an ardently besought young woman like Dorothy should have bestowed her hand so precipitately on a left-over lover. Yet, though Gossip was mildly cynical, it did not grudge George what it termed his consolation. Poor fellow, Rosamond had led him a dance! After such an experience a man can be counted on to hurl himself into the arms of the first attractive woman who is kind to him; but, usually, attractive women are on their guard against presenting themselves as a refuge. Of course, alone with her mother in suddenly tragic circumstances, Dorothy must have been especially susceptible to sympathy. George must have appeared at the "psychological moment." Dear Gossip, what phrases escape you!

Hetty Mallory was delighted with her brother's achievement. More worldly minded than George, she speculated with her husband as to the probable size of the Vasmer fortune and wondered if any important share of it had immediately devolved upon Dorothy. On this point she tactfully tried to elicit information from her brother, but soon satisfied herself that he knew nothing. As a prospective sister, she was attentive to Dorothy, and

liberal with advice on various subjects, from the proper way of humoring George at breakfast to the choice of curtains for the drawing-room. Hetty, in her energy and conscious competence, could not help being officious, and Dorothy, who had been prepared to love everybody and everything connected with George, could not help stiffening against Hetty's well-meant intrusions. She was sorry, but she did not care for George's sister.

The young men at the club which it had been George's custom to frequent arranged a dinner in honor of one whom they now saw but seldom. It was a festivity of a kind in which he had always been a leading and hilarious spirit. There were twenty of them who gathered in the upper room with its oaken beams and shuttered windows. The long table was lighted with tall candles in pewter candlesticks, the boards were bare, the feast was of an elaborate simplicity — nothing but oysters and butter-ball ducks and champagne. Steve Foster clinked glasses with George and reminded him of the last time they had drunk together. "You're happier now — and I'm just the same," he sighed. Later in the evening he lamented that he had overslept and missed the sailing. "It it had not been for that, who knows? They might be giving a dinner here for me. Who knows? Who knows?" He mused profoundly, gazing at his glass.

There was a piano in the corner; Lloyd Evans seated himself at it and played the accompaniment for the choruses. Through the haze of cigar smoke in the dim light, the club paintings on the walls assumed the appearance of old masters: at least to the eyes of the celebrants. Mellow was the word. "For he's a jolly good fello-o-w,"

they sang again and again with ever deepening feeling. The attenuated figure of Steve Foster was perceived weaving about in a dance of his own improvising, his arms held like a kangaroo's, his long hands flopping from the wrists.

George rose and got to the head of the stairs. "Good-night, fellows," he shouted, and then two of them clutched him, and the others gathered round; consternation showed on their faces. "You're not going yet! It's only about eleven. Stay, and we'll have a meeting of the Aurora Club."

It had been George who had originated that fictitious institution; he might be supposed, therefore, to have a feeling of loyalty to it.

"I'm sorry," he said. "But I have some work early to-morrow morning — it would n't be fair to the patients. I've had a bully time. Good-night, fellows."

Descending the two flights of stairs he heard Steve Foster screaming after him over the banisters, "*Scélérat!* oh, *Scélérat!*" A chorus was in full swing when he closed the door of the club behind him.

His boisterous days and nights were over; he walked across the Common to his rooms, breathing in the sweet cool air and thinking tenderly of Dorothy.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GREATEST OF ALL DAYS

AFTER breakfast on the morning of his wedding day, George took his surgical kit and walked as usual through the Public Garden to Dr. Armazet's hospital. He was early and the morning was fine, so he walked slowly. He wondered if any of those whom he passed could detect from his appearance that this was a day of great significance to him. He himself was serenely rather than exultantly aware of it. His bride was docile and adoring; he contemplated her in his thoughts with a tranquil pleasure. What gentle gray eyes she had — and they could sparkle, too; they would be both gentle and sparkling when next they looked into his, for that would be when she joined hands with him before the clergyman. And how soft and sweet was her voice! Soft and sweet would it be, indeed, when next he heard it musically murmuring the responses that should make her his wife. Never in his thoughts of Rosamond had passion merged into tenderness more than now in his thought of Dorothy. The trees of the Garden were in their full October glory — it would be a shining world of blue and gold into which he would take his bride. New Hampshire hills and lakes were awaiting them; there would be tramps along roads glowing with sumach and oak, climbs through enchanted forests to purple summits, canoeing on breeze-swept waters. Then back

to work and usefulness and a romantic domesticity — for, after all, to the young lover on the brink of marriage, what is more truly romantic than this novel domesticity into which he is to plunge?

In his white duck uniform, bending over patients, dressing and bandaging wounds, George forgot the day, the girl, the romance. The nurses, who remembered, watched him with smiling and admiring eyes. Late in the morning one of them came to him eagerly. "A telephone call for you, Dr. Brandon," she said. "It's Miss Vasmer."

George stepped out into the hall; the telephone was in an awkwardly exposed place. Aware of the interested audience in the next room, he was somewhat constrained in his answers. And he would have liked not to be — especially when she said, "Did I interrupt you, George? I felt I wanted to hear your voice."

How hard to reply to that, with four alert young women, to say nothing of that feminine entity, Central, pricking up their ears!

"Did you?" It sounded tame, he knew. "I wanted to hear yours."

"Are you feeling excited about this afternoon?"

"Yes, are you?"

"Awfully excited. Guess who are to be at the wedding?"

"Tell me. I can't guess."

"Rosamond and Graham."

"I did n't know they had come back."

"They got in last night. Rosamond telephoned just now to ask if I would be at home this afternoon. I told

her if she came early enough — about three — as I was going on my wedding journey after that. My dear, I could hear the silence — it was so blank!"

"Why was it such a surprise to her?" George asked.

"She and Graham had been on a walking-trip in Scotland and had never got our letters. When I told her it was you, she said she could n't believe it. But she thought it was fine, and she's coming with Graham. You don't mind my asking her, do you, George?"

"No, indeed."

"Only three hours now, George!"

"It goes slowly!"

"It would n't if we were together."

"Shall I come to you?"

"No. I must never take you from your work. That's the first rule. And I'm breaking it this minute! Now I'm going for a ride. While I gallop I shall be thinking of you, George."

"Don't let your thoughts run away with you! To-day you must gallop with special care."

The nurses were smiling when he entered the room, but he was not annoyed by it; he felt that to-day every one was privileged to smile at him and with him. The words over the telephone had come like a refreshing breeze. He cared not at all that Rosamond and her husband were to be present at his marriage; he could face Rosamond without awkwardness and Graham with indifference. Dorothy riding away for the last gallop of her girlhood caught his imagination, his emotion, and Dorothy, face aglow and eyes shining, galloping back to give herself into her husband's arms, summoned all his

tenderness. No other woman could ever again move his heart.

His work for the day was finished. Bidding his patients good-bye, he received wan, bright-eyed smiles and toneless yet sincere expressions of good wishes. From the nurses he had last words of shy congratulation. How kind people are, was his thought as he went down the steps; how ready their sympathy with another's joy! And he wished that all the patients might recover in a twinkling and that all the nurses might soon be united to husbands.

The noonday sun was more bright on the Garden than when George had passed through early in the morning. More golden, more delusive was the glory of all the withered leaves.

He lunched in his room, called in the servants and gave them parting gifts, and was dressing as a man dresses but once in his life, when Steve Foster entered.

"I thought I'd look in and see if I could be of any use to you at the last minute," Steve said. "Anything I can do like packing a bag or taking down the notes of things that you'd like to have attended to after you're gone?"

"Thanks, Steve, old man, I don't believe there's a thing. Just sit and chin with me till the carriage comes. I suppose I'm getting ready too soon, but I've always had a feeling that if ever a man should be on time, it should be at his own wedding."

"Yes, I'd be no dilatory bridegroom, you can bet," remarked Foster. "Look here, coming across the Common! A bunch from the Club — Sterrett and Morris and Ward and Wyman — I guess I'm not the only one that

wants to see you started right. Sterrett's carrying something that looks like a bottle."

"You're always hopeful, Steve, — always seeing things! But there's rum in that sideboard; you'll do me a favor if you'll pour out anything you like."

"Ordinarily at this hour I would n't think of it. But in view of the occasion —" With a pony of brandy he acknowledged the occasion.

And he was right about the destination of the four, and about Sterrett's burden. It was a bottle — a bottle of champagne.

"We agreed that if we could n't drink with you at your wedding, we'd have a glass with you just before it," Sterrett explained, as he unwrapped his parcel. "I've had it on ice at the club for the last half-hour."

George, with one flap of his collar buttoned, set out the glasses. "A handsome thought," he said. "And I wish I could have you all at my side during the ceremony. That's the only thing I regret about this wedding — the absence of my friends."

Sterrett carefully filled the glasses. "We shall be thinking of you. Here's to you both, George."

Round the circle the glasses clinked and were drained in a meditative silence. It lasted while George resumed operations before his mirror.

"You won't go back on us all at the club, I hope," said Sterrett. "You'll still come round once in a while?"

"Whenever I can," George answered. "I don't mean to lose you fellows."

He finished his dressing. "Yes, you'll do," said

Wyman. "You look the complete bridegroom. Nobody would ever take you for anything else."

"Yes," agreed Ward, "I bet you'll be spotted all through your honeymoon."

"You're all right, George," said Steve Foster. "When she sees you she won't be sorry."

George looked at his watch. "Quarter of an hour more. You don't see a carriage down below, do you, Steve?"

Foster thrust his head out of the window and drew it in again. "Yes, it's at the door."

"Then I think I'll be going. As I said to Steve, I can't run a chance of being late at my own wedding."

"We'll see you on your way," said Sterrett. "Sure you have the ring?"

All five crowded into the elevator with him; each of the five solemnly shook his hand before he entered the carriage. His last glimpse of them was as they stood in a semicircle on the sidewalk, congratulatory, yet subdued.

It was so short a distance to Mrs. Vasmer's house and the day was so fine that to drive seemed absurd. But George had felt that to walk to his wedding would be too ostentatious a piece of simplicity; it would amount almost to an indecency. To a well-brought-up Bostonian of George's generation there is no difference between publicity and indecency. At any rate, on this brief, momentous drive George secluded himself decently in the musty dimness of the Charles Street hack. Decently, too, rapidly and decently, without permitting himself to be a spectacle for possibly curious and skulking eyes, he slipped out of the hack and into the Vasmer vestibule,

and although he was still a quarter of an hour ahead of time the door opened to him mysteriously, spontaneously.

For the next ten minutes he was immured in a small upper room; there presently the clergyman joined him and put on his surplice, chatting meanwhile with professional ease about inconsequential things — the state of the weather, and the ducks that he had seen flying south, and the color of the trees out in the country. October, said the clergyman, was a fine month to be married in. George watched him and thought that it was the first time he had ever seen a clergyman getting into his surplice. In a remote, subconscious way he was surprised to find that priestly garments were donned in a matter-of-fact and unceremonious manner.

"It's time for us to be going down," said the clergyman.

George followed him obediently out into the hall. Then, wonderfully, from a room at the head of the stairs issued Dorothy, in her bridal white; she wore no veil, her cheeks were flushed, her eyes were softly radiant as they looked at George, and her lips trembled in a smile. She slipped her hand in his arm and with steady step accompanied him down the stairs behind the clergyman. The light pressure of her fingers, the perfume of her shining loveliness, the light in her gray eyes, and the bloom of her lips and cheeks as she looked up at George set all the strings of feeling in him quivering. He laid his hand on her finger tips and whispered, "My lovely little bride!" She whispered in reply, "I love you, dear."

Following the clergyman, they entered the big draw-

ing-room. A little group of people was assembled there. Rosamond, standing close by the door, was the first person to meet George's gaze. For one instant they looked gravely into each other's eyes, and in that instant George had a flashing vision of the moment when Rosamond, passing down the aisle to her wedding, had intercepted his glance. The vision passed; he and Dorothy side by side faced the clergyman, who stood in front of a fireplace about which were heaped and wreathed white roses and laurel.

The clergyman was pronouncing the opening words of the service. He was not one of those who read the marriage service in a tone that emphasizes to a frightened pair the dreadful, irreparable nature of their act. His voice was reassuring, pleasantly confidential; it seemed to remind them that they were being married, not buried, and to intimate an approving sympathy with the joyousness with which they made their promises. In spite of that, sobs from some one near by were once or twice audible, and George felt without seeing that Mrs. Vasmer had her handkerchief to her eyes. And twice, for all the sweet fearlessness in her low voice, Dorothy's lips trembled — once when the clergyman addressed the solemn, searching question to her, and again when she looked at George and offered him her finger for the ring.

They were pronounced man and wife.

The clergyman, suddenly beaming, shook hands, first with Dorothy, then with George. They turned and faced the others. Mrs. Vasmer was at once in her daughter's arms, and in a few moments delivered her-

self up to George. She was speechless with emotion, but in the relieved hum and rustle that now broke forth her speechlessness went unrecognized. Hetty Mallory, following her close, was not so contained. Hetty certainly was never afraid of the sound of her own voice, and she saw no reason why it should be subdued at a wedding — at so eminently satisfactory a wedding.

"My dear, if you knew how sweet you look! And it's the right way to be married — just your very dearest round you, the people that really care. And oh, I can't tell you how glad I am! It's the dearest wedding, the dearest room for it!" And so on, and so on, copiously from Hetty.

Philip Mallory followed her, then came some aunts and uncles, then Rosamond and Graham. Of the dozen guests they were the only ones not immediately connected with the family of either bride or groom.

"Dear Dorothy!" Rosamond said and kissed her. Somehow there seemed nothing else to say.

"Were you surprised?"

"Yes. Awfully surprised."

It was an awkward moment; Graham came in with, "I'm perfectly delighted, Mrs. Brandon," and Rosamond moved on to George.

"Sudden and quick — we've taken a leaf out of your book, Rosamond," George said with a smile. "We're going to live round the corner on Marlborough Street; I hope you'll be near us."

"I wish we might be. But we're going out of town — out near Dover." She hesitated a moment and said in

a lower voice, "Now that you've married Dorothy, you're twice my friend, George. She's the best there is."

"Yes," he answered. "And you're a brick, Rosamond." He gripped her hand and then her husband's, and Rosamond stood aside, with a queer stinging in her heart and a queer contentment there too.

It was a rather stiff little party; the very smallness of it in the big house made gayety impossible. Dorothy and George radiated joyousness, Hetty Mallory was jubilantly happy, Rosamond contrived to be conscious of her contentment, which was wrung occasionally by twinges of something that she did not regard as jealousy. But Mrs. Vasmer, try as she might, was a forlorn figure, and the aunts and uncles contributed no great responsiveness. Possibly they felt that Dorothy might have waited longer after her father's death, or that she might have done better than marry a young man of small fortune and a migratory record. No doubt they were too sympathetic with Mrs. Vasmer's foretaste of loss and loneliness to adopt a festive mood in a situation which she dominated all the more when she tried to put herself in the background. Dorothy cut the cake and Mrs. Vasmer's brother, Mr. Hugh Clarke, proposed the health of the bride and groom; that promoted a little flicker of vivacity. But although the food was delicious, no one seemed to have an appetite for it, and opened bottles of champagne stood quietly sighing away their souls. Rosamond, oppressed after a little while by the atmosphere of dullness, went to Dorothy to make her departure.

"But I'm just going up to dress," Dorothy exclaimed. "And I want you to come up with me."

That desire was not to be resisted, though Rosamond felt sorry for Graham.

In her room Dorothy rattled away to Rosamond, excited, happy. Yes, their honeymoon would have to be a short one; George was so very busy; Dr. Armazet was a perfect pig the way he took up all George's time — much as ever that he let him get married.

"Dr. Armazet?" questioned Rosamond; and the explanation freed her from the sense of responsibility for interfering with a man's career which had haunted her thoughts. Thankfulness and contentment spread within her; she surprised Dorothy by suddenly hugging her close, kissing her, and exclaiming, "Oh, Dorothy, dear, you're both going to be happy — and I'm so glad!"

"I hope I'm not being cruel and heartless to poor mother," Dorothy said. "Poor dear, she tries to comfort herself; she feels that father is with us to-day — giving us his blessing; oh, if he only were! I want to believe it, too; do you suppose our generation *can* believe, the way people used to, Rosamond?"

"No," Rosamond answered, "I don't. But I am sure that some things are as sacred as they ever were — love and marriage."

"So many people don't seem to believe even that," sighed Dorothy. "I'm glad I'm not one of them. — Oh, I have n't shown you my ring." She held out her hand and let Rosamond examine and admire the diamond. "And this brooch is George's wedding present to me; is n't it lovely!"

It was an aquamarine, large and lucid and lustrous — and the sight of it suddenly produced one of those sharp stabs in the heart of Rosamond's contentment. Instinctively she laid her hand on her own aquamarine pendant.

"Oh, you're wearing one, too," Dorothy exclaimed. "I never saw it before. Was that one of your wedding presents?"

"Yes." Rosamond calmly laid her pendant beside the brooch. "Yours is much larger and handsomer. That's as it should be — a man's present to his bride. I do think George has wonderful taste in stones."

There was a knock on the door; then a maid's voice said, "Dr. Brandon is all ready, Mrs. Brandon."

"Good-bye, you dearest girl." Dorothy clung to Rosamond a moment; Rosamond clung to her. Then Rosamond went alone down the stairs.

Her appearance caused an immediate movement of eagerness in the scattered groups; Mrs. Vasmer, whose sense of her duties as hostess had chained her to the drawing-room, when her heart yearned to the dressing-room, hastened to take up a position at the foot of the staircase. Soon Dorothy and George descended — Dorothy just as radiant in black as she had been in white, and somehow the perception of that struck a pang to her mother's heart. One swift embrace, two quick and nestling kisses, and her girl was gone.

"Was it rather dismal for you, Graham?" asked Rosamond, as they drove away. "I was sorry to leave you all alone."

"It was n't bad. I found that Mr. Clarke had been

in the Twentieth Massachusetts — went all through the Wilderness Campaign; I had quite an interesting talk with him. He has some mighty sensible views about the militia. I —"

"Dorothy looked sweet; she is sweet. But it seemed to me an awfully dismal party."

Graham glanced at his wife and said after a moment, quite timidly, "You mean — you — you did n't quite like to see him married?"

"Yes. I'm jealous." She glanced at her husband's troubled face. "And Graham, dear, his wedding present to her was an aquamarine — bigger and handsomer than mine!" Her voice as she announced it was querulous, on the verge of tearful.

Graham burst into laughter and squeezed her hand caressingly. And then the tears started from her eyes, and she cried, —

"Oh, I know it's silly, Graham, dear, and I do love only you — and I suppose under the circumstances it was just the right and proper thing for him to have done — and yet it made me feel so badly — so badly!"

CHAPTER XX

ROSAMOND DWELLS UPON HER DESTINY

THE place where Graham and Rosamond made their home was in the Dover hills, forty minutes by train from Boston. Five years before Graham had bought the abandoned farm and renovated the stables and house. The hunt club of which he was a leading and faithful member had its quarters less than a mile away. Graham had given his place the name, "Sunset Acres"; lying on a westerly slope it faced at the bottom of the hill a pine grove over which on clear, calm evenings the sunset light seemed to linger and slumber.

Here he had spent more time than in the lodgings on Mount Vernon Street, which he had retained until his marriage. Rosamond had been enchanted with the idea of living in the country; she had been enchanted with the house and the place, which Graham had restored to some trimness. The house had to be enlarged; the work had been well under way at the time of their marriage, and they returned to find it completed.

It was a two-story wooden house, L-shaped, painted white, with French windows opening on a wide veranda, at the end of which a glassed-in sun parlor was gay with flowering plants. In the angle of the ell, the driveway swung round a circular grass plot and then curved down between rows of shrubs to the road. On the slope above

the house was an apple orchard; an upstairs balcony, that Graham had converted into a sleeping-porch, was partly sheltered by the spreading top of an ancient Baldwin tree. Within the house, on the first floor, the living-room occupied the whole of the wing, a big, low-studded room with a wide fireplace and massive chimney breast flanked by books from wainscot to ceiling. A tiny hall, out of which ascended a straight and narrow little staircase, divided living-room from dining-room. Dark red curtains and rich-colored rugs and dull-finished mahogany softened the sharpness of the light that streamed in at the long windows and glanced from polished floor and cold white surfaces.

It was a snug and comfortable house for a newly married pair. And altogether it was a very complete country place; it had its artesian well and windmill, its barn and poultry yard and remote piggery, its vegetable garden, orchard, hay-field, wood-lot, and neat stone walls. Rosamond declared that she did not mind the loneliness. They were three miles from the village, half a mile from the railroad, but scattered about among the hills within walking distance were the newly built houses of other adventurous newly wedded persons. Rosamond counted on having friends out to lunch with her during the week and on coming in to Boston frequently herself; she would always have week-end parties; and she would find occupation enough in learning to manage the farm; she assured Graham that she meant to take that care off his hands. Graham laughed and said that John Wilkes, the farmer who was their nearest neighbor and who worked the land on shares, had already done that for him; but

Rosamond was of the opinion that with a little experience she could manage more economically.

No, she was not lonely, nor did time hang heavy on her hands. She and Graham were well settled before the hunting season was over; she took some of those early morning rides with him. There were two hunters in the the stable; she loved riding, and on the days when she could not ride with Graham she liked to feel a double responsibility for exercising the horses. She gave one of the hunt breakfasts and felt triumphant because it was a success; people admired the house and seemed to like her — and they all had such an obviously high opinion of Graham! And as the days went by, she found that she liked him better and better herself. His preoccupations, that had been so disconcerting on the wedding trip, were less frequent; now that she was not seeing him every minute, he did not wear her patience thin; the place supplied them with things to do together, things in which they were equally interested. Rosamond found herself reluctant every morning to have her husband leave the house, expectant every afternoon when the time for his return drew near; and she remembered with a sense of happy contrast certain honeymoon mornings when she would have been perfectly delighted to have Graham go away and stay away. Often during the day she would visualize his face, in different expressions that she knew, and recall the sound of his voice and of his laugh. She resorted to this exercise of memory and imagination more frequently now than in the time of her engagement. Thursday was her blue day, for that evening Graham always remained in

town to drill his Troop, and though her father or Ruth usually came out to pass the night with her and keep her from feeling lonely, Rosamond experienced invariably a disturbing apprehensiveness. Graham was a wonderful rider, but at these drill meetings he did such dangerous things! She wished he were safe at home with her. And yet she would not have had him give up his brilliant equestrian performances. They made her all the more proud of him. Only, in the nights when she imagined him rolled under the hoofs of the galloping steeds, she lay awake in her bed and waited and waited — waited until she heard the distant whistle as the last train from Boston slowed down at the station; waited until she heard steps on the veranda and the closing of the door; waited until Graham's arms were round her and his kiss pressed against her lips; then, thankfully, happily, she closed her eyes and drifted into sleep.

She wondered how she could ever have doubted her love for Graham. Those days seemed very, very long ago.

Yet there were occasions when she was aware that George Brandon's charm for her still existed, when she rebelled against the tyranny of sentimental memories. Sometimes Dorothy came to see her, and then Rosamond would think, "How strange that she should be more to George than I am! He's known me so much longer, so much better, and he cared for me so much. I wonder if he's satisfied. I wonder if Dorothy is satisfied."

His transfer of allegiance constituted Rosamond's only reason for feeling unsatisfied. She did not see him

often; he seemed never free to make an expedition into the country. In the little Marlborough Street house Rosamond often lunched with Dorothy. These luncheons were early, for by half-past one the dining-room had to present the appearance of a waiting-room for patients. Sometimes on these occasions Rosamond encountered George. He usually came in when she and Dorothy had nearly finished. He ate rapidly, chatted rapidly, and at the earliest moment excused himself in order to withdraw into his office.

"He must be very busy," Rosamond said once when his departure seemed quite abrupt. She felt a little piqued — remembering in days past how easy it had been to hold his interest.

"He is," Dorothy answered. And the air of pride with which she stated the fact roused in Rosamond a sense of rivalry, a desire to establish the point that Graham was a harder-working man than George.

"You don't know how lucky you are, having your husband at home for luncheon every day," she said. "And it must make such a pleasant break for him. Poor Graham has only time usually to stand up at a counter and eat a sandwich. And he never gets home in the evening until almost seven o'clock."

"Oh, my dear," replied Dorothy. "You're lucky to be able to count on him then — and he's lucky to be able to count on his dinner hour. Half the time I dine alone. Last week George spent two whole nights with a patient that Dr. Armazet thought needed to be watched every minute. How the poor boy stands it I don't know. Do you think he's looking very fagged, Rosamond?"

"No, not in the least."

Rosamond had a bewildered feeling of resentment; she wondered if she should ever accustom herself to Dorothy's proprietary tone in speaking of George. And it irritated her vaguely to feel that when she and George were together her selfconsciousness exceeded his; she realized that his interest in Dorothy and in his work had effaced her, and she was obliged to admit to herself that when she went to lunch with Dorothy she looked forward with undue expectancy to seeing George.

Dorothy enlarged upon his work and Rosamond listened, divided between jealousy and interest. It was work that she could understand, — better, she felt, than Dorothy, who declared that she never let George communicate to her any graphic surgical details. Rosamond had no squeamishness in that way. She could have followed with the thrill of excitement a narrative, however pathological, that illustrated qualities which she admired. Even while Dorothy recounted to her the evidences of George's success, Rosamond thought, "What a pity that she is n't more appreciative!"

The exclamation recoiled upon herself. She had earnestly tried to establish an intelligent understanding of Graham's work; she had learned that he derived the chief part of his income from an annual retaining fee as counsel for a large manufacturing corporation, and that his practice concerned itself principally with the affairs of corporations; it all seemed to her very intricate and undoubtedly it required intellectual processes of a high order. But she had to confess that she was more interested in the remuneration that Graham received

for his work than in the work itself. She had not a sordid mind, she was innocently proud of her husband's prosperity and success. Every fresh illustration of it pleased her and brought him a hug of delight. After all, they had subjects enough to talk about — though on this particular afternoon, when she came from Dorothy's house, Rosamond could not help thinking how perfect it would be if Graham were a doctor; she could have been so much more his companion then.

That evening at Sunset Acres there was a family party: Rosamond's father and her sister Ruth and her brother Ralph all were there. Ralph, a freshman at Harvard, had come over to spend the night and follow the hounds the next morning; he sought every opportunity to attract the favorable attention of his brother-in-law, whom he admired enormously; with Graham's eye on him he rode with a recklessness which it frightened him afterwards to think of, for he was not a good rider; with Graham's eyes on him, he discoursed modestly of his tackles on the football field; his ambition was to ride well enough and grow old enough to be taken into the Troop. Having done and said all that was possible to commend himself without seeming too openly assertive, he would sit quietly looking at Graham, listening, watching, quite openly a worshiper. He thought better of his sister since she had married Graham; he had always been afraid that Rosamond would marry some one whom he should be obliged to term a "dub" — and by a dub he meant every man who could not sail a boat, ride a horse, play a fair game of tennis, swim the "crawl" stroke, and enjoy the humor of the Rogers Brothers.

Indeed, every one in the Ramsay family admired Graham — even Ruth, who had been disappointed at first that it was he and not George who was to be her brother. Graham always noticed her clothes and remembered what he had seen her in last. He thought she had pretty hair, too, and he often pleased her by remarks about the dangerous, the insidious twinkle in her eye. He made her feel that when she grew up and "came out," she might be quite fascinating, perhaps; she hardly dared to hope it, but it was a comfort to be so approved of, especially when Ralph was in the habit of making such "jarring" remarks about one.

Mr. Ramsay sat in a deep armchair before the fire and discussed with his son-in-law the question of strengthening the navy. Graham, sitting on a bench in an angle of the chimney breast, smoked a cigar and placidly upheld the safe and sane policy of building four new battleships a year. Mr. Ramsay, who did not smoke, irritably condemned such a wasteful and brutalizing programme. Ralph annoyed his father by expressing approval of Graham's views. Rosamond and Ruth, knitting neckties side by side on the sofa, did not venture into the argument.

Mr. Ramsay was an idealistic and philosophical stockbroker; that, at least, was his own conception of himself. A slim, spare man of much nervous activity, he was a creature of whims, prejudices, and superstitions. His hobby was the promotion of peace, the abolition of wars; he engaged with gusto in petty broils and violent altercations, and then in a sudden tide of good feeling rushed to make magnanimous concessions. He had prospered

in business, for he was a shrewd adviser to his customers, but he frequently said that if he were to show any one a list of ninety per cent of the investments — or speculations — that he had made, the astonished person would exclaim, "What poor fool did this?" He was likely to have a prepossession in favor of any reputed gold mine that had an engaging name; he had paid tribute to the seductive sound of the Golden Hind, the Gopher of Ophir, the Bright Behemoth, and the Bold Buccaneer. More than half sincere had he always been in believing that for him and his family a special virtue resided in the letter "R;" and it had been a satisfaction to him that his daughter in marrying had acquired one more name possessing that magic initial.

"Well," said Rosamond finally, when what had been a discussion was taking on the character of a paternal harangue, "there is n't going to be any more war, father, and if there were neither you nor Graham would go."

"I don't know that I would n't," replied Mr. Ramsay with some asperity. "I disapprove of war, but I might consider it my duty to go. I should have gone to the Civil War if I'd been old enough. Of course, our recent acts of aggression in Cuba and the Philippines —"

Rosamond hung over him from behind his chair and laid her hand across his mouth.

"Well, we 'll let you dash off to the next war, dad, if you insist upon it," she said. "But Graham's always going to stay at home and take care of me — are n't you, Graham?"

Graham smiled and blew out a slow succession of

smoke wreaths. But Ralph answered for him, quite indignantly.

"Not much he would n't! You women seem to think that all a man has to do is to sit at home and take care of you, no matter what happens. Why, if there was a war and I was Graham, I'd go to it — even if I was married to — to —"

"Juliet Morris," murmured Ruth; and Ralph, who was unaware that his sister had observed his budding passion, flushed and subsided.

"Graham," said Mr. Ramsay, "I'll have a little of the Scotch."

Presently they were talking politics, and as Graham and Mr. Ramsay held opposing views on the tariff and the trusts, Rosamond and Ruth soon withdrew. Ralph remained to assist Graham in setting his father right and succeeded only in heightening Mr. Ramsay's scornful eloquence.

"They're just children, Ruth," Rosamond said to her sister, as she bade her good-night at the top of the stairs. "You realize it about men after you've married them. And when you realize that, you love to take care of them."

Yes, but they were not little children, she said to herself when she had closed the door of her room. And she stood for a time without undressing, thinking of what it would be to have a baby of her own in her arms — at her breast. "Nothing so good can ever happen to me!" she sighed to herself; it was her daily sigh, her daily hope. She envied the young mothers of the country-side, she envied all mothers everywhere; often jealousy made

her morbid, and her lips would quiver, her eyes would fill at sight of a small baby; she would sit silent, drooping, when young mothers talked. Each day she was afraid of hearing that Dorothy was more fortunate than she. And somehow that seemed to her the one thing that she could not bear — to feel that she could not do for Graham what Dorothy could do for George.

Then one day she received a note from Dorothy telling her.

Rosamond flung herself upon a sofa and sobbed. After a time she went to her desk and there wrote a gay, light-hearted, enthusiastic letter to Dorothy, pausing at intervals to wipe the tears from her eyes. She said that she would begin at once upon some little garments — and she wondered if she could ever finish them, with such an aching heart. It was so long now that she had been a married woman; her case was no doubt hopeless. And she had even as a girl looked forward to motherhood and imagined that sometime she should have children — lots of curly-haired, brown-eyed, sunny-faced little children; she had imagined herself seated on the floor playing with them, while they tumbled against her softly; she had imagined herself walking in a garden with them clinging to her hands, hearing their voices and their laughter. What a destiny for one — childlessness! The sofa again received her while she wept.

CHAPTER XXI

THE DULLNESS OF LIFE

FURNISHING even a small house in Marlborough Street is an expensive process, and neither Dorothy nor George had any bargain-hunting instincts. They had always been accustomed to go to high-priced shops, and to pick out usually some of the highest-priced articles, and George felt that it was in the nature of extraordinary expenses to be extraordinary.

He had learned that Dorothy had no income of her own. Mr. Vasmer had left all his property to his wife. Mrs. Vasmer had arranged to make her daughter an allowance of two hundred dollars a month, and George had compelled a promise from Dorothy to spend her allowance exclusively upon herself. He was sure that his income was sufficient to support the household comfortably. Buying furniture, rugs, pictures out of capital seemed under the circumstances a perfectly justifiable thing to do. And the reduction of income occasioned by such purchases was trifling — only a few hundred dollars. Mrs. Vasmer was so generous in supplying various domestic needs that George felt he and Dorothy were getting settled with extreme economy.

"I can't possibly spend two hundred dollars a month, George," Dorothy had exclaimed. "Certainly not when I'm in mourning."

And then she had proceeded, quite to her own amaze-

ment, to demonstrate how easily the thing could be done.

She could not understand it, for she certainly was not extravagant. To be sure, when she had lived with her parents, she had frequently received from them presents of clothes. But black was so inexpensive! She sighed, bewildered, over the bills. Florists charged awfully, and as for cabs — she determined the next month to keep a record of the times she took a cab; she was sure the livery stable cheated. Charities — they had made a considerable hole in the allowance, but she could not cut down on the charities. She had always been open-handed, and the Infants' Hospital and the Animal Rescue League and various other worthy causes had enlisted her active interest and support. Anyway, she had to ask George if he could advance some money to help her pay her bills for the first month.

"I'm frightfully ashamed of myself," she said. "But I thought you'd rather have me owe it to you than to the tradespeople. I'm sure it won't happen again, and the first of next month I will settle up with you."

George still had a considerable bank balance from the sale of some shares to meet his initial extraordinary expenses. The idea that husband and wife should put themselves into a relation of creditor and debtor was revolting to him, and he said so.

"Why, what was that promise that I made when we were married?" he asked. "What's mine is yours. Don't feel badly about it, Dorothy; getting started involves extraordinary expenses, of course."

She tried hard and ran behind only ten or fifteen dol-

lars the next month. Meanwhile, George, who had undertaken to deal with all the household bills, was quite appalled. To meet them his income for the month was insufficient; he had to draw against the remnant of capital still left to his bank account. Obviously they were living too extravagantly; with great reluctance he asked Dorothy what they could do about it. She did n't know; ways of economizing were new to her. She thought that perhaps they could get along without a laundress; it would not be so satisfactory, of course, to send the washing out, and it would be much harder on the clothes. But after all, why worry? That very day her mother had made them a present of a hundred dollars, in addition to the monthly allowance, and had intimated that she meant to do that sort of thing often.

"That's very kind of her," George answered, "but I say that we make it our rule always to put every gift of that kind into a savings bank. We ought to be accumulating a reserve fund."

"But mother's so rich! She would love to help us."

"Of course; and she does. But we should n't rely on her help to meet current expenses. We ought to set aside whatever she gives as a sort of trust for future members of the family."

Dorothy laughed; the idea of future members was still as novel as it was pleasant to her imagination. "What can I do, then, George?" she asked. "I'm willing to be economical, only I don't know where to begin."

So George went over the bills carefully with her. He suggested that perhaps they could get along with fewer guinea chickens, ducks, and other delicacies. He thought

that possibly they had been having people to dine with them a little oftener than was advisable. He suspected that the cook and the laundress and the waitress had been getting fat on cream. "I don't know; I'm green as I can be at this sort of thing," he said. "But we shall have to work it out. Of course we can't spend more than we've got."

"Of course not," Dorothy agreed dolefully. "But oh, George, is n't it a pity I'm so extravagant!"

She set herself to conquer her vice. She discharged the laundress, cut down the marketing, and became niggardly of invitations to her friends. Then one day she read in the newspaper that the cotton mill from which George derived a portion of his income had passed its usual dividend. A strike that had been going on for three months had foreshadowed this action; nevertheless, Dorothy saw that it had disturbed her husband and waited for him to speak. He did not, and so after two or three days she asked him if it would be a serious matter for them.

"Not so serious as if I were n't beginning to get some returns from my practice," he answered. "It looks as if now I should be able to count on a little extra, besides what I get from Dr. Armazet."

Dorothy's zeal for economy was stimulated, even inflamed. A fine, unselfish idea burned within her. She would say nothing to George now, but at the end of the month he would learn what a practical, unselfish wife she could be. She began to deny herself the luxuries to which the allowance from her mother entitled her. She had fresh flowers in the house now not oftener than once

a week. She took no cabs, she gave up her favorite amusement of going to the theater, reluctantly she dropped appeals for money into the waste basket; most self-denying of all, when Christmas was at hand, was her determination, rigidly carried out, to buy no gifts for any one costing more than a dollar. It seemed absurd to be so scrupulous when one day her mother put a check for two hundred dollars into her hand and told her that it was for "little extras." But when she found that George felt they should be firm with themselves and bury the sum in the savings bank, she agreed meekly.

So she continued to practice her unaccustomed self-denial. When the bills for the month came in, she was able to present herself before her husband and say, "George, dear, there's more than a hundred dollars of my allowance that I have n't spent — so you must n't let the bills worry you. And I can do as well as that every month — really, nearly every month," she added, a little reluctantly.

"Dorothy, you're a brick!" George kissed her, and kissed her again with an agreeable warmth of enthusiasm; he kissed her often enough in love; she liked to be kissed, as now, in praise. His doing it made her know how great was her craving for just that kind of appreciation. "But we're all right without it, dear; I'm getting prosperous; I shan't have to touch a cent of your money. So you must spend it all, right away. It was n't much fun economizing, was it?"

"No, not really. Though I did like the thought of perhaps being a help to you, George."

"You're always that. Much more of a help to me than I am to you, I'm afraid."

"No. I'm glad you're a doctor. You will help me, won't you?"

The look in her eyes reached his heart. He held her tenderly and said, "Poor little girl! You're not afraid?"

"Oh, not for myself, George. But sometimes for the little one. I could n't bear it if things went wrong — and I'm glad you're a doctor and can help me. I wish we were together more."

"I wish so, too."

"Shall you always be as busy as you are now?"

"So long as I am with Dr. Armazet. And afterwards, when I set up for myself, let's hope I shall be as busy."

"Yes, and of course when people need you, I ought not to want to keep you from them. But I do miss you, the evenings and the nights when you have to be away. I think it would n't be so bad if I could really feel at these times that you are making me a little the companion of your thoughts."

"But I do!" cried George earnestly, before he had time to think whether he did or not.

"Do you truly? Sometimes when you've been away I've thought of you so hard — it seemed as if you must know. And I've hoped that you would speak of it and show me that you felt I was with you at the time — but I've always been disappointed. And sometimes I've wondered if you really cared; I thought that if you did you would have known and answered."

"I fear I have n't much faith in telepathy. But, Dorothy, I think of you when you don't know; I think

of what is going to happen — your happiness and mine."

"Do you? And you're quite sure that you will still like me when I'm not nice-looking any more?"

He laughed and patted her caressingly. "I'm quite sure. As if you could ever be anything but nice-looking! Nice-looking! What a word for it! — Shall we go to the theater to-night?"

"Oh, yes! It's so long since you've taken me anywhere. What shall we see?"

They settled upon the play. George telephoned to the agent to have tickets for him at the box office, and then started off on his afternoon rounds. At six o'clock he telephoned to Dorothy that he would have to pass the evening with a patient. Should he countermand the order for tickets, or would she get some one else to go with her?"

"Oh, dear!" she cried. "How disappointing! Can't you possibly go, George?"

"No; I'm disappointed, too."

"And it was to be your only free night this week! I'd ordered a specially nice dinner. It makes me so cross! Well, I had my mind all made up for a spree, and I'm going to find somebody and have it. Do you mind, George?"

"Of course not. I want you to have a good time. Then the tickets will be at the box office."

Dorothy meditated. She could probably persuade some girl friend to accompany her, but she saw enough of girls during the day. She felt that it would be much more pleasant and amusing to go with a man. There

had been four men who had actively wanted to marry her, and she had seen virtually nothing of any of them since her return from Europe. They had all written her deeply sympathetic notes after her father's death; they had all sent her very chilly congratulations upon her engagement. Of course, it had been a shock to them, but she thought they might have been a little more pleasant about it — especially since they knew how much she really liked them all. Now here was an opportunity to bring about a better state of mind in one of them. Which one should it be?

She fixed on Hugh Shepard. He was the gayest and most amusing of the four — and she thought he had cared about her a little more than any of the others.

She telephoned to him in the same spirit as on former occasions when she had thrilled his soul with invitations.

"Hello, Hugh," she said. "This is Dorothy — Dorothy Brandon. George is on a case this evening, and I have theater tickets. Won't you dine and go with me?"

"Why, yes, I'll be delighted. Yes, thank you very much."

There was a little hesitation in the acceptance, but Dorothy was not troubled by that. He probably felt a bit awkward; as soon as she saw him she could make him realize how pleasant it would be just to be good friends.

To her chagrin the experiment was not successful. She failed to overcome Hugh Shepard's air of constraint. With her sixth sense she felt that at the theater he was uncomfortable — that his public appearance as her escort made him so. The play was disappointing, the evening

was dull. Worst of all was the vague feeling that she had somehow diminished herself in the eyes of one who had been a worshiper; he thought she had exacted of him homage which it was no longer a joy to render.

She bade Shepard good-night on her doorstep. When she entered the house, George came out of his study to welcome her.

"Did you have a good time?" he asked.

"Not especially. Oh, George, I don't believe I can ever have a good time any more unless you are with me!" She spoke dolefully.

"You can't expect me to be sorry for that!"

"Yes, because life is so dull! You so seldom can take me anywhere. I think I shall just have to settle down and find pleasure in nothing but my children!"

He laughed, and then on a sudden impulse he pressed her hand and said,

"Women are brave, and you're the bravest of them all."

Her eyes shone to that. Of course it was n't true, but to have George think it and say it touched her heart. What did it matter about Hugh Shepard? Her husband's arm was round her waist as she mounted the stairs.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PROTÉGÉ

WHEN the advantage of living in a house just round the corner from her mother had presented itself to Dorothy, she had not considered the possible disadvantage of occupying a position almost directly across the street from her sister-in-law, Hetty Mallory. Yet this was the situation of the house that George had bought, and that it involved inconveniences amounting sometimes to irritations Dorothy had not been long in discovering. During the period of getting settled, Hetty had been executive, bustling, practically helpful and temperamentally exasperating. She charged herself with all sorts of duties and responsibilities; relieving the bride of burdens, she occasionally usurped her authority. Dorothy was not bustling and vigorously aggressive, but she was not incompetent; she was easy-going, but she was by no means meek; and resentment over Hetty's invasions of her newly created empire smouldered within her. That she repressed it and did not let it flame out on several provoking occasions was due not to timidity, but to an unwillingness to precipitate a situation that might be distressing to George. He admired his sister, was fond of her, and deferred in many things to her judgment; in those early days it had wounded Dorothy acutely once or twice that without

any reference to her he had recognized the value of Hetty's suggestions and had seemed untroubled by Hetty's officiousness.

After Dorothy was well established in her new house, Hetty formed a habit of "dropping in." Her visits were usually brief; she seldom sat down; and although there was something about her that to her sister-in-law was unsympathetic and irritating, Dorothy would often have liked her better if she had been less flitting and fragmentary. "She does n't give me a chance to be really friendly with her," Dorothy thought. "She just gives herself a chance to see what kind of a state the house is in." If a pair of andirons needed polishing, Hetty would be likely to say, "Is n't it odd how few parlor-maids will ever polish brasses properly? I have one who simply adores making them shine, but I realize what an exception she is." She would inspect the cyclamens in the window to see if they were getting enough water, and if they were not, she would promptly comment upon their needs. She would recommend some breakfast foods and denounce others in a perfectly authoritative manner. Passing the door of George's consulting-room and glancing in at his untidy desk, she would remark, "Dear me, I did hope that when George was married, he would show some improvement in neatness," and Dorothy felt that it was a veiled indictment of her failure to achieve neatness for him.

One morning, contrary to her usual custom after dropping in, Hetty took a chair. "Now what?" thought Dorothy, and prepared herself for one of the confidential and somewhat alarmist discourses which Hetty, as an

experienced mother, was in the habit of volunteering. It appeared, however, as if she were merely animated by a desire to talk about the Morrises' ball to which she was going the next night. She really hated balls — at her age — but Phil loved to go, and of course one must humor one's husband. She had a new dress to wear and described it; and all the while her bright brown eyes were roving with restless interest about the room, until suddenly Dorothy saw them directed in a narrow, squinting expression at the top of the piano.

"No, there's none there," Dorothy remarked coldly. "I dusted it off myself this morning."

Hetty was unabashed. "A great mistake, to do a maid's work for her. Whenever I find that a maid has neglected a task, no matter how trifling, I always summon her; otherwise you spoil them."

"Oh, I dare say. But sometimes, when you're conscious of so many shortcomings in yourself, you feel ashamed to be always exacting perfection from others. At least I do."

"Well, I don't," declared Hetty. "They've got to be kept up to the mark, and the only way to do it is by keeping after them. You need n't be afraid of perfection. You won't get it, however exacting you are. Oftentimes to do a thing yourself instead of calling a servant to do it is sheer laziness — bad for yourself as well as for the servant."

"Perfectly true," admitted Dorothy. "But I can't be exercising my character all day long. I have to rest it now and then."

Hetty switched with characteristic abruptness to

another topic. "What did you think of the play last night?"

"Trash. But I did n't see you there."

"I tried to get your eye. Phil and I were on the other side of the house — down in front. I could n't quite see whom you were with."

Dorothy smiled. Hetty's vigorous and shameless curiosity was one of her traits that was more amusing than annoying.

"You would n't have known him if you had seen him. But you were right in thinking that it was n't George."

"Then it was n't Hugh Shepard?" Hetty had evidently derived from some source or other knowledge of Dorothy's excursion with the luckless Hugh, though she had not hitherto commented on it. "Phil said he could see enough to be sure that it was n't; I told him he must be mistaken. Well, now, who was it, Dorothy?"

"His name is Hanford — Sidney Hanford. He was on the ship going over last summer, working his way as a cattle man. George and he became quite intimate, and it was on the boat that I met him — at the same time that I first met George. He's a Dartmouth College man; he comes from somewhere up in New Hampshire. I had never seen him since our first meeting until the other day when George brought him home to dinner. He is working on a newspaper here in Boston, and his ambition is to write novels. He is very young — only twenty-one. He is living in a hall bedroom somewhere and had caught a frightful cold; he had looked George up, and that is

how George happened to get hold of him. Now you know all that I do about him, Hetty."

"Except how he happened to be at the theater with you last night."

"Oh, I invited him. I hoped that George could go, too, but as usual he had to give out at the last moment. Of course it's very much to the boy's advantage to have some recreation, and I imagine that he can't afford to go to the theater often. So I mean to take him from time to time."

"My dear! You don't want to get yourself talked about!"

"How absurd! He's a mere child!" An angry flush stormed over Dorothy's face.

Hetty stood her ground. "Of course a woman who is seen repeatedly with men other than her husband is talked about. And if you will forgive the plain speaking, Dorothy, in your condition —" Hetty, instead of proceeding to plain speaking, paused on a silence eloquently definite.

"If you will forgive the plain speaking, Hetty, I have a mother who is perfectly competent to furnish me with advice."

Hetty, now as red as Dorothy, rose at once. "Very well; I shall say no more, of course."

She left the room with dignity. Dorothy held herself tense until the sound of the outer door being closed reached her ears; then, picking up a book she hurled it savagely into a nest of sofa pillows and sent after it another and another. And then she dropped on the sofa herself, put her head on her arms and sobbed. She felt

outraged, insulted; what right had anyone to say such things to her?

She wanted to pour her grievance into her husband's ear; if he had been at home she would have rushed to him. But soon she got control of her temper and her senses, and then the memory of his former easy acquiescence in Hetty's domineering measures quite checked her desire to seek his sympathy.

Yet George was not unsympathetic in these days. When he was at home with her, he displayed always gentleness and tenderness. He watched over her carefully to see that she did not do too much; he was patient with her impatience; he tried to keep from her all his own worries — worries about cases, worries about money. From these he was never free in spite of his cheerful and confident tone. By practicing severe economy in all personal expenditures he was able to maintain the household without appealing to Dorothy or accepting her frequently proffered assistance; so she went cheerfully on, giving to charities, buying things that pleased her, trying, as she would have termed it, to do nice little things for people.

And among these pleasures which she allowed herself was the further patronage of Sidney Hanford. George encouraged it; he liked Hanford and he felt that Dorothy was the better at this time for having such a live interest as that of developing a protégé. Hanford dined with them frequently, went to the theater with them; on several nights when George was busy, he accompanied Dorothy alone. Whether the fact of those further excursions came to Hetty's ear or not, Dorothy

never knew; on each occasion she saw friends in the audience who might very easily have communicated news about her movements. Hetty, at any rate, had given up the habit of dropping in and no longer subjected her either to pathological dissertations or corrective suggestions; that was a thing to be thankful for.

The quality of Hanford's admiration pleased Dorothy; it was different from her husband's — more unworldly, more closely and keenly observant and at the same time rather shy and deprecating. George was always considerate and solicitous, a good practical sort of husband on whose protective nature she could rely. Where he fell short was in not recognizing her dependence on ideas — on hearing and sharing ideas; or perhaps he vaguely recognized the need and yet was too driven with work and too tired in the intervals to do much towards satisfying it.

He came home one night at about one o'clock to find lights in the drawing-room. When he entered, Hanford was gathering up a pile of manuscript from a table. Dorothy was reclining on the sofa. Hanford turned his ingenuous, deprecating smile upon George.

"I'm afraid it's very late; I'm afraid I've been keeping Mrs. Brandon up in a shameful way," he said. "She was good enough to let me read her a story that I've written."

"Sorry I was n't at home to hear it, too."

"It's not a success; Mrs. Brandon will tell you that." Hanford's tone was rueful.

"I've been horrid and said just what I thought, and he's taken it like a lamb," explained Dorothy.

"That's something for you to remember, my dear, after he 's become a lion," said George.

Hanford laughed in his embarrassed way and said he guessed he was more like a sheep.

After he had gone George asked, "Was his story good at all?"

"Not good enough," Dorothy answered. "But it has flashes; some time he will do a thing that is worth while. He's young — he was so bashful about reading! Over the passages into which he had put the most feeling he blushed like a boy."

"What was his heroine like? You?" George smiled at her.

"I don't believe so. Why?"

"Because it's easy to see you are his heroine."

"What nonsense!"

"Not a bit. And if I could write, I should be putting you into stories."

"Would you, dear?" Dorothy kissed him.

"Did he get you true to life at all?"

"Silly!"

Nevertheless Dorothy had been aware that young Hanford had tried to put her into his story — that the strange unreal creature of maddening charm and singular nobility represented his conception of herself. She knew it by his excessive and apologetic and blushing embarrassment over the actions and speeches of the character, she knew it by a subtle instinct of her own. And preposterous as was his idealistic conception, it pleased

her, and she even lay awake a little while dwelling on the agreeable thought that some time Hanford would be famous and would make her in one disguise or another always his heroine.

CHAPTER XXIII

SPRING OF THE YEAR

ON a warm afternoon towards the end of April Rosamond was moving slowly down the avenue at Sunset Acres, lingering beside each shrub to inspect the stage of its development. Already the forsythias were exchanging their golden yellow for green, the first leaf buds on the bare stems of the hydrangeas were beginning to unfold, the spiræas had decked themselves in white, the prunus triloba was embowered in blossoms of rosy pink; passing from one bush to another, Rosamond touched the branches, bent over them and scrutinized the buds and the blossoms. At last she reached the foot of the slope where inside the wall Graham had set out some young trees in the autumn — mountain ash, horse-chestnuts, and maples; each one she visited with the same pleased and wondering interest that she had bestowed upon the shrubs. The plump smooth buds of the horse-chestnuts swelled on the tips of the branches; some of them had already burst open; it was as if the closed little fist had opened out into the spread little hand, but green, greener even than the young grass; Rosamond looked at those young horse-chestnut leaves tenderly, for somehow they made her think of a baby's tiny hand. On the mountain ash last year's berries hung in blackened clusters beside this spring's furry gray buds; the red maples and the Norway maples

seemed to be mixing up the colors of autumn with those of spring, so tinted was their gay foliage with pink and bronze and golden hues. They changed now from day to day. "They won't be interesting in that way much longer," thought Rosamond, "at least not a daily excitement"; and she wondered if it was so with all living things.

One of the horse-chestnuts was not thriving, and she went close to examine it; all over the trunk were dotted tiny carmine specks; she tried to rub some of them off, but could not. "Oh, dear! another pest!" she murmured. "How mean of it to attack little baby trees!" She would call Graham's attention to it, and perhaps he would find a way of saving the young tree. It was wonderful, the knowledge that Graham had of methods of dealing with plants and trees, and he knew and liked the birds, too, and all small and helpless things. Thinking of that characteristic of her husband gave Rosamond in this moment a special happiness.

Never in all her life had she felt as now the holiness as well as the beauty of spring; never before had the mystery and the miracle of it touched her deepest soul. She felt herself as much a partaker in the mystery and the miracle as the swelling buds, the blossoming pear tree; she was glad that the coming of her first child should have been announced to her in the spring. Already she thought of it as the first child; the alteration in her outlook was complete, for only a few weeks before she had believed herself condemned to a life of childlessness. Now rosy little figures sported in her dreams, and when she was awake she had visions of a series of little babies; one

after another they would come to be cuddled and played with and held to her breast. And she did not lose sight of them as they grew older; she imagined herself walking hand in hand with them, playing with them in the garden, seeing their chubby faces and round eyes upturned to her, hearing the funny prattle of their voices; endlessly she entertained herself with these imaginings. She was never lonely any more, and there had been times during the winter when she had been very lonely, had even, in the feeling that she had been set apart as a barren woman, desired nothing but loneliness. Now all was changed; she liked to laugh with people and be gay; from pleasant dreams the early morning songs of birds roused her, and listening in a contented drowsiness she drifted again into pleasant dreams; stormy weather did not depress her spirits; the rain beating upon the windows, the gale roaring down the chimneys, leaden skies and driving clouds no longer had a baleful influence on her mood, but seemed to emphasize her sense of inner security and peace. To a few persons she had already told her secret; her own family knew of it, and she had gone in to Boston one morning to tell Dorothy. If there had been anything that might have clouded her radiance, it would have been Dorothy's way of receiving the news; Dorothy had expressed pleasure and the hope that they would both have boys, and then had passed on to a partly jocular description of the tediousness and discomfort and indignity of the preliminary time.

"You'll feel differently when the baby comes," Rosamond said.

"Oh, I suppose so; I hope so. I don't want to dis-

courage you; never mind, I suppose we would go through even worse for what we are to get."

Rosamond felt that she would go through anything and that she could not imagine herself grumbling, but she did not say this. She had been struck by the unaccustomed querulous note in Dorothy's voice, and had come away from the interview with an uncomfortable feeling that Dorothy was disposed to reproach George for having got her into such a condition and for not being more attentive to her now that she was in it.

"I'm afraid she married him too suddenly," thought Rosamond, forgetful of the fact that she herself had married Graham almost as suddenly. "But of course everything will be better after the baby comes."

And meanwhile how could one be aware of jars and discords! How could one be aware of anything but the swelling joy of spring!

From her musings and from her leisurely inspection of shrubs and trees she was roused by the sound of wheels approaching along the road. Looking over the wall, she saw Graham seated in a buckboard beside William Briggs, the village storekeeper and postmaster. Briggs, who was driving, drew up to let Graham alight and called out to Rosamond, "I hope you won't put a crimp in his political prospects, Mrs. Rappallo."

Walking up the avenue arm in arm with his wife, Graham explained. Briggs and some of the other influential citizens with whom he had been in conference wanted him to stand as the Republican candidate for election to the legislature in the autumn. They seemed disinterested about it; they liked the work he had done

as chairman of the town warrant committee; they had told him that with him in the legislature the interests of the district would be well taken care of. If he would consent to run, they were ready to begin a quiet campaign that would eliminate all other candidates for the nomination.

"I told them I would think it over for a week," Graham said.

"Why should n't you do it?" Rosamond asked.

"Well, if I go into politics at all, I shall probably want to stay in it. I shall have to sacrifice some of my law practice and the chance of increasing my earnings very considerably. It might be wiser for me not to enter politics until I have accumulated more of a practice and more money."

"I don't care anything about being rich," Rosamond replied. "I should n't want the children to be brought up to feel that they were rich." Graham laughed, and so did Rosamond, but she added, "Well, you can't take any step now, Graham, without considering them, can you?"

He admitted that he could n't.

"I'd rather have them grow up to know you as a man working for the public interest than just for his own pocket all the time. Besides, I believe you'd be a good statesman, Graham." He laughed at her quaint use of the word; he laughed again when she said, "I know it from the way you talked at the town meeting."

Rosamond could not understand why he should laugh. She had never before tried to express — she had been too shy to try to express — the feeling of pride

and admiration that had been hers when she sat in the gallery of the town hall and heard Graham lead the debate on the floor, answering questions with readiness, replying to opponents with firmness and courtesy, carrying with him always the majority of the voters. From that day she had been convinced that in public life or, as she preferred to term it, in "statesmanship," there was a proper field for her husband's abilities.

They talked about it that evening; Graham gave Rosamond a closer insight into his ambitions than he had ever done before. Hitherto she had assumed that the practice of the law and military studies fully occupied his serious thoughts; it interested her to find that he had long been nursing other aspirations. If Graham should serve acceptably in the legislature, he might in a few years be the choice of the party for Congress. Or it might be that he should find himself a candidate for some important administrative office. His chance to make a start had come rather earlier than he would have wished, but perhaps that was not sufficient reason for declining it.

Rosamond again urged strongly the wisdom of accepting it. But afterwards, when she had gone to bed and had left Graham sitting up at work over some town matters, she lay awake for a little while and thought it strange that she and Graham could become so absorbed in discussing his career when the career that they were both really interested in was that of the unborn child.

CHAPTER XXIV

A HUSBAND'S INDIAN SUMMER

IN June, Dorothy went to North East Harbor to pass the summer with her mother. She expected the baby to be born towards the end of July.

George remained in Boston, doing double duty, for Dr. Armazet was taking a six weeks' vacation in Europe. The little Marlborough Street house wore a look of dubious hospitality; in the darkened drawing-room huddled and swathed furniture peered at one suspiciously; the shades were drawn and the floors were bare; only George's consulting-room retained its cozy, confidential, reassuring aspect. One servant had remained to keep house for him and to give him his breakfast; he lunched wherever he happened to be, and he dined at the club. The partial return to the habits of his bachelor days was alarmingly refreshing; he told himself that it was n't actually the life, but merely the change that he found agreeable. With Dr. Armazet's going abroad, George's work had diminished, so that usually his evenings were times of leisure. Always he found a group assembled on the club balcony overlooking the tiny court. A lone ailanthus tree, reputed to have a magical property of driving flies from the neighborhood, raised its foliage above the railing, on which garden boxes of geraniums and trailing vines did their best to promote the illusion of an environment of suburban

greenery. At the long table thus secluded from the view of neighboring windows, ten or a dozen members were accustomed to dine each evening; they welcomed George back to their board with cries of joy and many a cocktail. Since his marriage he had not enjoyed such relaxation as was now his almost every night; to sit smoking with three or four others through a long evening, or to play a game of billiards, or to go with a party to some flimsy yet enlivening musical show revived him; he felt that socially he had been growing stale and dull. He did not permit himself the irresponsible enjoyment in which he had formerly indulged and for which Steve Foster demonstrated an insatiable capacity; a sense of duty to his patients withheld him. But to return for a time, from domestic seclusion and professional service, to the merriment and gayety of former days, compensated him surprisingly for his loneliness at home. Moreover, the relief from financial pressure was instantaneous and welcome. Before his marriage he had never been obliged to make the close calculations which had now become a weekly, almost a daily, task; he had lived comfortably with seldom an impulse to overstep the limitations of his income. Recently, without that impulse he had felt himself thrust nearer and nearer the boundary; only by incessant struggling did he maintain his position within the lines; and now to feel that there were three months of respite in which he might accumulate a surplus had an enlivening influence upon his spirits.

But his greatest satisfaction consisted in receiving Dorothy's letters. They were the first letters that she had ever written to him; they constituted almost a new

phase of married life. The spoken words of love in daily intercourse were sweet, but they had grown of late infrequent; an attitude of the heart was beginning to be taken for granted, and occupation and preoccupation had together tended to curtail expression. Letters carried messages and words of affection that lips had ceased to utter. George, reading the first of these letters, was moved deeply. "I miss you, George, dear," Dorothy wrote. "I think it must be true that people need to be separated once in a while to know how much they care for each other. I look forward so to your coming on the fifteenth of next month; I shall feel safer when you are here. — Would n't it be exciting if I should have something brand-new to show you? But I hope not; it would be too disconcerting to have him arrive without his daddy here to receive him. — Think about your little girl — oh, such an inappropriate adjective! How glad I shall be to have it all over! — Mother sends her love and I'm folding a whole armful of my own inside this letter."

George was smitten with a sense of selfishness. He cut short his evening at the club in order to reply to Dorothy's communication; he realized that without such letters and the emotion they aroused and the thoughts they inspired, the freedom of his days would be but emptiness. Writing to her, he thought of her more tenderly than when she was visible before him; he wished that he had shown her greater consideration, he imagined her facing during all these months the supreme destiny, fearlessly aware of the possible doom that might be lurking behind the curtain of new life, and a sudden

agony of reverence and dread seized him; with what smiling heroism to await the inevitable peril! The longing was urgent in him to go to her and not leave her side until the ordeal was past. These moments might be the most precious of all their lives. He besought her to let him know if she needed him; in that case no other need could matter.

Her reply showed that she had been touched. But he must not worry about her; she had never been better in her life. Her mother was a comfort and was making her visit as restful and pleasant as possible. Had he seen Graham Rappallo, or heard anything about Rosamond? A letter just received intimated that Rosamond was not at all well. Perhaps George would look up Sidney Hanford and be nice to him during the summer. Sidney had rewritten his story and made it into a short novel; he had sent her the manuscript. It had its good points, but she was n't sure that it would be wise to seek publication; in fact, she had counselled him not to make the effort. Perhaps she had hurt his feelings; any way, he must be very disappointed. It might please him if George would show a little interest in him.

George dutifully asked Hanford to dine with him at his club, and Hanford told him quite ingenuously of Mrs. Brandon's condemnation.

"I've spent a week thinking it over, and to-day I destroyed the manuscript," he said. "It's awfully good of Mrs. Brandon to be so interested — and so honest."

A few days later George received a letter from Dorothy, praising him for being so nice to the boy, and saying that she was saving a note of appreciation to

show him. Through the hot days of midsummer her letters came to him as sparkling and as welcome as the dew. She was sympathetic with his discomfort — which was wholly imaginary; she wished he might be enjoying the cool breezes of North East. As a matter of fact he was pursuing his practice under the most favorable circumstances — with no domestic worries, with leisure for recreation, and with congenial companions for his leisure. The hard-worked young doctor was frequently to be seen playing tennis at Longwood or occupying a front row seat at a professional baseball game; and his evenings spent on the cool club veranda, where ice tinkled in glasses and the smoke of cigars was wafted upwards, entitled him to no special compassion.

One day meeting Graham Rappallo on the street, he asked after Rosamond. Graham seemed a little blue; Rosamond was not very well.

"She's in bed, and the doctor thinks she will have to stay there pretty much all the rest of the time from now on. It's very hard for her, but she's being cheerful about it — willing to make any sacrifice so that things shall be right in the end. Won't you come out and lunch with us on Sunday? With me, that is. But Rosamond would be delighted to see you."

George accepted the invitation, even while feeling that the luncheon would impose a strain. He always liked to see Rosamond; she would always have a charm for him. He found her on that pleasant Sunday morning sitting up in bed on the sleeping-porch; a light summer breeze fluttered some little strays of hair across her face. She wore a lace cap with a bow of pink ribbon; lace ruf-

flies showed beneath the sleeve of her pink dressing-gown as she reached out her hand. And he noticed with a feeling of pleasure that within the folds of the dressing-gown lay the aquamarine pendant.

"You don't look very ill, Rosamond, and you do look perfectly charming," said George. "I could almost suspect you of feigning illness in order to receive visitors in this manner — and costume."

She smiled. "I've been prinking for you most of the morning, so I'm glad to have the compliment. No, I'm not ill at all, but I can't do very much; and this is a pleasant place to do nothing in. Sit down, George, and tell me all about Dorothy."

Graham excused himself in order to mix cocktails.

George looked about him. Green-and-white awnings softened the light; green wicker chairs and table and Navajo rugs furnished comfortably the outdoor room. Sitting up in bed Rosamond commanded a view down the southwestern slope, a view that included the pine woods on the right and the distant hills on the left. The meadow grass near the house had just been cut and lay in sweet-smelling windrows; and a pink rambler flung its blossoms up over the railing beneath the awning. George commented on the pleasant view.

"Yes, it needs only a glint of water; that's the only lack. We thought of going to the seashore for a while, but the doctor thinks I'd better stay here. And it's better for Graham, too. You know he's entering politics — but I should have let him tell you that. Never mind; he will. Dorothy has only a little time to wait now, has n't she? Are n't you going to her soon, George?"

"On the fifteenth."

"Go earlier if you can; take her by surprise. I don't believe men know how much we need our husbands at these times. Graham is so good to me; I think he gives me more attention than he can well afford — and even then I'm often lonely. How exciting to be like Dorothy — to have all those months safely behind! November seems so very far away!"

"Yes, it 's a mean wait — but I don't know anybody who would find it better worth while."

She smiled a little, for the thought pleased her. She remembered with a feeling of tenderness for him that he had once hoped she might be the mother of his children.

At luncheon George found himself not subjected to such constraint as he had anticipated. Graham was friendly, even confiding, in that he described his plans for his political campaign. After luncheon, when they sat on the piazza smoking, Graham could not refrain from expressing his anxiety about Rosamond; he grasped at an opportunity to obtain encouragement and reassurance from a doctor. From the statement of conditions, George felt that the outlook was not altogether hopeful; he told Graham, however, that while in such cases mishaps might occur, the precautions that were being taken reduced the possibility to a minimum. That this opinion did not help very much he knew, glancing at Graham's troubled eyes.

"The man loves her," he thought; "I was all wrong about him — all wrong."

He returned to Boston in a curiously chastened mood. Life was often cruel to women; he could not bear to think

that it might be cruel to Rosamond. And it could not be cruel to Dorothy! In the train he drew out of his pocket her last letter and read it again with a new emotion.

CHAPTER XXV

MOTHER AND CHILD AND A LOST ILLUSION

DOROTHY'S boy was born on the first day of August, at ten o'clock in the morning.

Afterwards George went out into the sunny garden, where the bees were busy among the poppies and the phlox stared up at him with its brightly questioning eyes. He sat down on the bench under the little plum tree, and then looked up at the window of the room from which he had come. All was quiet there now; he wondered that he should feel so shaken, so weak; he was not accustomed to have such feelings after operations. Dorothy had wished him to stay with her, and had clung to his hand until she slipped over the borderland of dreams. She had dreaded nothing, had borne the suffering with a smile. "We won't make a tragic business of his coming, George," was the last thing she said before she passed under the ether. And she had not made a tragic business of it; she had emerged into consciousness so promptly as to hear her child's first lusty cry; it brought a drowsy smile to her face even before her eyes could focus on the little red squirming object held up for their delight. George had seen the slow dawning upon her of comprehension, adoration, joy; now she and the baby both slept and he had come out to feel the sunlight, to see and smell the flowers, and to watch the window of that quiet, sanctified room. Wistaria climbed a trellis

beneath it, a spray of leaves shook in the breeze out over the open window; from within George had noticed it while Dorothy clung to his hand; now he looked at it from the other point of view and visualized what it might see in the room — the calm face on the pillow, the bassinette in the corner where the indistinguishable little object slept.

Dorothy, no less than he, had wanted a boy; he was the happier now for dwelling upon her happiness. As he sat in the sunny garden, visions projected themselves upon his mind; he saw Dorothy walking with her little boy to meet him, smiles on their faces; he could not quite see the little person's face under the broad straw hat that shaded it, but he could see the smile and the short white dress and the bare chubby legs; the bare chubby legs broke into a tottering, toddling, twinkling little run; then he felt himself grasping the warm, soft little body, clasping the warm, soft little hands. His imagination took erratic, ecstatic flights into the future, making as it flew pictures of Dorothy and the boy — the boy at different ages, Dorothy always young, always lovely, loving and loved.

Mrs. Vasmer came out to him, still eager and flushed with excitement. She had grown stout in the last year; she panted when she sat down. In her hand she held an envelope.

"The prettiest little baby I ever saw," she declared. "And so big and strong! Nine pounds, the nurse says. Dorothy weighed eight and a half, and we thought her an enormous baby. You will call him George?"

"That seemed to be Dorothy's wish."

"Naturally — for her father and her husband. Dorothy came through it so splendidly; I hope there will be lots of little brothers and sisters. We always regretted that Dorothy was the only one."

"Yes," George answered, "I hope we shall have a family — not too quickly."

"You must let me help now to make things easier for you. Dorothy has told me that your pride forbids her to devote her allowance to household expenses, but you must n't have any pride now about getting little presents occasionally from me. And I want to celebrate this day with a gift. There are two checks in this envelope; one is for little George, the other is for yourself."

George protested. "I should like to put them both to the credit of little George."

"No, you must n't do that. He will have enough some day. It will please me if you will use the money for yourself. I know that it takes a good while for a young doctor to develop a paying practice. And there 's no reason why I should n't help my son-in-law. I 'm well able to."

"Oh," said George, "I'm willing to be helped! Only I hope you have n't been too liberal; I hope you won't be. My father used to say that people were better off when they were n't well off. You must n't make me feel rich, mother."

"No, but comfortable," urged Mrs. Vasmer anxiously; she was herself the embodiment of comfortable living. "Surely worry does no one any good — and I want you to be free from it."

"When you talk like that you fill me with anxiety as to the contents of this envelope!"

"Open it, do! And try to look pleasant, no matter how you feel!"

George drew forth two checks, each for a thousand dollars. He turned a humorous look on his mother-in-law.

"I have always thought it an excellent thing for children to have to support their parents, after a certain age. A few more of these, and little George will be deprived of a responsibility that he would cherish. — It's very sweet of you, mother, but honestly — spare the father and spoil the grandchild, if you will!"

"All right; I shall try to spare the father a thousand dollars occasionally," replied Mrs. Vasmer with one of her infrequent semi-masculine plunges at humor. "No, George, I have n't volunteered to help you this first year, because I believe it does young married people good to feel the pinch of a small income. But the virtue in adversity wears off after a while — and you will gain nothing by being always worried about bills. And besides, there's another thing." She put her hand on George's hand caressingly. "I did feel rather badly when Dorothy married you so soon after her father's death. But I came to be glad she did. For you really have been a son to me, my dear boy, in the time when most I needed and wanted a son. So please allow me these little pleasures."

"I feel this morning, mother, that I can deny you nothing," said George.

He admitted to himself a healthy satisfaction in con-

templating the freedom from care that would result from these projected acts of generosity. He would have greatly preferred to achieve that freedom by his own exertions; he knew that in a short time now he would have achieved it. But to have security already cover him with its wings, especially in this moment when he had incurred the unimaginable liabilities of parenthood, was not unpleasant; and it was not unworthy, so long as he did not let himself slacken in his work.

He felt that in that respect he should be under no temptation. The more active the practice, the better he liked it. Professional ambition had increased with professional success; it had its birth in the moment when Dr. Armazet had given him his chance, and it had developed under the close association with that untiring surgeon. Sometimes Dr. Armazet would let fall an anecdote of George's father, whose intimate friend he had been, though following a different branch of the profession; they were anecdotes that stirred the son's pride. More and more George was inspired with the desire that the Brandon name should go down in honor in the medical profession; with the birth of his child he hoped that there should be a third George Brandon, M.D. His own desire to achieve a reputation as a skillful operator had broadened into the wish to be, like his father, sure and subtle in diagnosis, sympathetic and understanding with men and women; he was growing constantly more studious and more watchful.

And so before very long he was impatient to be back at his work. Dorothy, convalescing, had not much need of him; visitors kept coming to see her and the baby;

flowers filled her room. She told him that other people appreciated the baby more than he did, — that he had seen too many babies. Indeed, she was rather disappointed because he did not seem to look upon the child simply as something cunning and sweet and adorable, a lovely little toy, but as a young human being whose future claimed already serious thought. He was fussy, she felt, in wanting her to diet for the sake of increasing the baby's food-supply; the doctor attending her was quite willing that it should be supplemented by the bottle. Secretly she ascribed George's persistent urgings on this point to Hetty Mallory's influence — the woman bragged so about the heroic treatment she endured in order to nurse each of her children ten months!

"Don't you want to give him the best possible start?" George asked.

"Oh, if he were a weak little baby, but he's so strong and he takes the bottle already so well! And have n't I gone through enough for him as it is!"

"I don't think that's quite the way to feel about it, Dorothy."

He had never before intimated that he was in any smallest degree disappointed in her. She resented the implication; she felt that out of consideration for her he should have withheld his comment, and that if he still loved her as he had done at first nothing could have dragged such a reproof from him. She looked at him bitterly and said, "Oh, very well, if you speak to me like that"; she went into the next room and asked the nurse to bring her the gruel that she had rejected. She drank it in George's presence with a display of anger like that

of a passionate child; she knew that she was being and seeming childish, and it only angered her the more. The nastiness of the drink was as nothing compared with the fact that her husband had chosen to express disappointment and disapproval; she felt at that moment that she hated him. She said in another burst of passion, —

"Unless it's necessary, I don't want to nurse the child at all. It's a hateful, painful, horrid thing for a woman to have to do; it's disgusting. I suppose you're shocked. Well, a woman can be a good mother and still detest the feeling that she is a sort of animal — a cow!"

He said nothing; she felt that she resented more than all else the condemnation of his silence.

Her mood of resentment did not pass, nor did her unwillingness to make the sacrifice which she regarded as so unnecessary. She extracted from both the attending physician and the nurse the assurance that the baby might safely be weaned at any time, and somewhat defiantly announced to George her intention of emancipating herself as soon as possible.

George did not attempt to override her decision. He put his arm round her and said, "Of course, the kid will get on finely, Dorothy." But his kindness and his acquiescence did not deceive her; she knew that she had disappointed him, and she in turn felt injured. It was as if the merit of her act in presenting him with a son was virtually canceled by her refusal to submit to a tyrannical routine that would make of mothers merely animals. Attributing as she did George's point of view to his sister Hetty, and believing that Hetty represented to him the maternal standard, Dorothy felt irritated

and unsympathetic. She had not overcome this feeling when the time arrived for him to return to Boston; he was aware of a coldness in her farewell. And George had a despondent foreboding that the little boy, who should be drawing them closer together, might be an innocent agent in driving them apart.

George's thoughts accompanied him in his journey. He could not conceal from himself the loss of an illusion, and he knew that he had not concealed it from his wife. He had believed that she would find every duty of motherhood a joy. The memory of her face when she had emerged from anæsthesia into consciousness and looked upon her child he had treasured as reflecting for him the supreme loveliness of woman. Could it be that the expression which had seemed to him so beautifully and deeply significant had been produced by only a shallow pride in motherhood?

He could not help questioning; he refused to admit the answer that pressed upon him with the roughness of truth. In the train his thoughts reverted to Rosamond, doomed to her bed for the long period of her waiting, wretched in body and knowing that her hopes were in peril of being thwarted, yet for the sake of the little life that she was struggling to save maintaining cheerfulness and courage. Suppose the baby delivered into her arms; would Rosamond shirk any least responsibility of a mother?

A comparison that put his wife at a disadvantage, and implied that there had been a truer foundation for his old love than for that which he was pledged to cherish, could not be pursued.

CHAPTER XXVI

A YOUNG MAN REVOLVING ABOUT A YOUNG MAN'S CENTER

SIDNEY HANFORD lodged in an unfashionable quarter of Boston, but his windows looked out on a pleasant little park; the houses, given over to furnished lodgings and employment agencies, were of a substantial appearance that denoted a past acquaintance with prosperity. The room on the third-floor front of Number 9 contained the usual furniture of the furnished lodgings — a shabby sofa upholstered in cloth of once startling colors, an equally shabby and gayly upholstered arm-chair, a small oak writing-table, a bed with the white enamel flaking in spots from its iron bars, and a Landseer engraving to decorate a yellow wall-paper. On one corner of the writing-table a pile of manuscript gave evidence of industry. The drawers of the table were filled with other manuscripts whose soiled and thumbed appearance suggested stupidity on the part of editors or inability on the part of the author. Sidney, though admitting certain defects in them, preserved them with the hopeful intention, when he had achieved a reputation, of selling them at inflated prices to the identical persons who had declined them. "A double pleasure," he was fond of reflecting, "to make an editor eat my words and his own."

Sidney had taken his quarters with the idea that they

would be but temporary; he had continued to occupy them for the better part of a year untroubled by their aridity. He felt that anything that was frankly temporary was endurable and hardly worth bothering about. And as the days went by, he had become so absorbed in the writing which occupied his leisure hours that he was indifferent to his surroundings.

It never occurred to him that his life was at all cheerless or lonely. There was a group of young Dartmouth men who had formed a club table near by, where he dined. They were mostly fledgling lawyers, with desks in important large offices. They wondered why Sidney, whose father had been a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New Hampshire, had not chosen the law. Their conversation was of cases and decisions, and Sidney listened to it sometimes. But often when they supposed he was listening he was pursuing a clue that he had just seized to the development of the story that he was writing. They liked Sidney for his simplicity and at the same time they were a little puzzled by it. They wondered why he did not live in a manner more in keeping with the dignity of the position that his father had held.

The Chief Justice had left his two sons an income of about two thousand dollars each. William, the older boy, was practicing law in the New Hampshire capital, was married and had two children. He deprecated his brother's choice of a career. Journalism was vague, literature was delusive. Only in rare cases did they bring in good returns. But then William regarded his patrimony as a fund which it was necessary to increase as much and

as rapidly as possible, whereas to Sidney two thousand dollars a year seemed adequate for all possible needs. Marriage was at present out of his reckoning; and a single man who had two thousand dollars a year and did not go in for the work that he most enjoyed doing, without considering the question of returns, was a fool.

Newspaper work Sidney did not enjoy doing, but he had been advised that it would mean a valuable experience for one who wished to be a writer, and so by persistent effort he had attached himself to the "Morning Star." On an afternoon in September he entered his room, light-hearted because he had struck off the shackles of his distasteful employment. Henceforth it was to be literature for him; no more of journalism. He was determined to be a worker — no mere dilettante. There were plots enough, ideas enough, floating in his head, if he could guide them safely out of that vasty deep to port. Excellent resolves he made. He would be no gusty worker, but systematic and methodical — a worker like Trollope — or rather, for he did not value Trollope's product highly, like Balzac. Every morning he would work upon fiction from nine until one. His afternoons he would devote to going about with his eyes open, gathering impressions, jotting down notes, collecting ideas. Three evenings a week he would devote to writing.

The incident which had precipitated his withdrawal from the newspaper office was the rejection by a magazine of the best story that he had written — a story that even Mrs. Brandon had approved. The rejection had disappointed him, but it had stiffened him in his deter-

mination to write stories, and, some time, novels. He decided then that the way to succeed in an art was to practice it. And the newspaper work had been interfering seriously with his opportunities.

His first impulse on entering the room which was henceforth to be the exclusive scene of his labors was not to set immediately about his writing, but to communicate the important fact of the change in his life to some one who would be interested. The person that he thus chose to favor was not his brother; William's interest would hardly be sympathetic. He was sure that he could count on the sympathetic interest of Mrs. Brandon, severe critic though she had been. Already he had a correspondence with her that he greatly prized. She had pleased him immensely by writing to him with her own hand of the birth of her baby, a week after the event; he had spent a whole evening in framing an answer which should combine emotion and restraint in suitable measure. His dread was of slopping over, and yet his letter could not have been sincere if it had not expressed emotion. Never before in his life had his thoughts dwelt so on the episode of motherhood, not even on the occasion when his sister-in-law had achieved it. Possibly it was an evidence of increased maturity on his part; but he was aware that information of an addition by his prosaic, uninaginative, efficient sister-in-law to her family could not arouse in him such a sense of a beautiful and poignant happening as that which Dorothy Brandon's letter had inspired.

He had written to her of his failure to secure publication for the story that she had liked, and was hoping now

for a note of condolence by every mail. He was rather ashamed of the eagerness with which he watched for the postman's coming and of the disappointment which ensued. Now he had reached the point of wondering if he had presumed too much upon her interest or if he had written of his failure in an unmanly way. The thought that she had perhaps placed such an interpretation on his note, and been disgusted by it, tormented him. If he had a mean side he did not want her to know it — but he himself felt that he had written because she had shown such interest in the fortunes of his story, not because, wounded, he must crawl to her for petting.

Now, if she really believed him guilty of such pusillanimous behavior, perhaps he could clear himself by a letter showing that adversity had stiffened his ambition. It was very important that she should continue to think well of him — the most beautiful and charming and intelligent woman that he had ever known. More than that, she had become a vital factor in his writing; she was his audience and his heroine; from each facet of her character that she turned towards him, a whole new character sprang upon his imagination. She summarized and vivified womankind; she spiritualized and typified her sex. Was it not important for a writer to maintain avenues of communication with such a being?

So he determined that without waiting any longer to hear from her he would announce to her in his most sparkling manner the step that he had taken — and he hoped that she would recognize in it a certain gallantry. During his walk home from the office he had been

phrasing this announcement, and then rejecting the phrasing. He foresaw that he should pass an agreeable evening striving to perfect the letter.

Then he opened the door of Number 9 and found on the table in the hall a letter from Mrs. Brandon. He stood there and read it in the dim light.

"DEAR MR. HANFORD:

"It's a keen disappointment; you betray so little feeling that I believe I must really be more disappointed than you. But it's only a question of time before your work is given a hearing.

"And now I want you to come to us here at North East for a little visit. My husband thought you were looking tired; you have been working too hard. I am sure you need a vacation. Do let us hear that you will come for the two weeks beginning the twentieth of September. We can't offer you any excitement; I'm not able to do much as yet. But good air and good scenery and all the time to yourself that you want we can promise you; and mother joins with me in hoping that you can come.

"Sincerely yours,

"DOROTHY BRANDON."

The young man read this letter with happy excitement. He put it in his pocket and ran up the stairs to his room. He was still smiling to himself and his blue eyes shone bright under their long lashes while he stood at his window and looked down into the little park. She had been disappointed — but not in him! He might have known she was too kind a person to ferret out discredit-

able meanings in one's harmless words. How fine of her to have such faith in him! Oh, he must justify it!

The twentieth of September was ten days distant. He must work hard in that interval so that he might take to her some manuscript for discussion and criticism. She seemed always to see unerringly what he was aiming at, and to appreciate especially the little touches that he liked best himself. And then reading his "stuff" to her, — he always spoke of it as "stuff," — he invariably realized more keenly than at any other time where it was crude and weak; without being a censorious listener, she somehow awakened in him a livelier sensitiveness to imperfection. And besides, he liked her and liked to be with her because she was so nice to look at. In fact, she was the nicest person to look at that he knew.

Sometimes he wondered how it had happened that she had married Brandon. Not that Brandon was not as worthy of her as any other man that he could think of; but it seemed to Sidney, groping back to his first recollections, that when she and Brandon had met on the cattle ship it had been as strangers. He wondered what the story of their romance might be.

He wrote the neatest little letter in reply to hers that he could frame, and for the time being forgot his purpose to emulate the industry of Balzac.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE IMAGE OF HIS FATHER

ON the twenty-fifth of September, Hetty Mallory arrived at North East Harbor. She had come to pay a brief visit to her friends the Middletons, and she was looking forward eagerly to an introduction to George's baby. Hetty was a woman who sincerely loved babies — not merely her own. Rich and poor, clean and dirty, they appealed equally to her as cunning and interesting and adorable — though that last was a word she seldom permitted herself to use, feeling that it had been appropriated and despoiled of value by silly, gushing women. When she went shopping or walking in Boston, she always carried with her several pocket handkerchiefs and made a point of stopping to wipe any dirty baby face or nose that she encountered. The slatternly mothers were more often stupefied than enraged by these officious performances; their anger was usually turned to pleasure by Hetty's saying, "What a sweet, cunning baby! It is n't fair to him (or her) to let such a cunning thing go dirty!" She was quite unerring in specifying the sex. The nursemaids along the Avenue and in the Public Garden had learned to watch for her from afar. Some of them thought she made it a practice to patrol these resorts of the perambulator pushers. Many a novel-reading young woman lounging on a seat had Hetty chided because the sun was shining in her charge's eyes.

Liking babies as she did, she liked Dorothy — in her thoughts — better for having one. She forgave her for not answering her letter of congratulation, for not replying to her eager questions about color of eyes, amount of hair, and potential resemblances. George himself when appealed to on these points had been vague. Hetty, fond of her brother, hoped that the little George looked like him, was eager to discover that he did. So at noon she walked the half-mile from the Middletons' house to Mrs. Vasmer's. In her hand, done up in white tissue paper, she carried a present for the baby — a mother-of-pearl teething-ring with three small bells attached. She had provided each of her own babies with a similar serviceable toy. It was by no means the only present that she had bestowed upon young George: a pair of little shoes, a knitted blanket, and a flannel sleeping-bag had already testified to her interest and affection, and it is to be said for Hetty that she cherished no resentment because of Dorothy's rather inexcusable neglect to acknowledge these gifts. Hetty was always willing to make allowances for women before and after childbirth, for they were so often queer at such times; she regarded herself as rather uncommonly normal in her manner of undergoing the experience.

It was a summery day, with a bright sun overhead, and Hetty walked leisurely, carrying a pink parasol tilted over her shoulder. She was a slim, graceful young woman; she had style and distinction of bearing; those who did not like her felt that her manner of strolling denoted supreme self-satisfaction. They also thought her eyes were too round and too brown and the lower

part of her face too solidly made. But to most people her expression was pleasant, and it surely was so now when she ascended the steps of Mrs. Vasmer's house and saw Mrs. Vasmer reading at the end of the piazza in the shelter of the vines.

Mrs. Vasmer gave her a surprised and cordial welcome, wished that she would come and make them a visit after she finished with the Middletons, and asked about the little Mallorys. Hetty launched forth eagerly: Phil had learned to swim; Susie, poor child, had suffered wretchedly from middle ear, but fortunately had escaped the necessity for an operation; Freddy could pick out letters now on his blocks. But after all she had not come to talk about *her* children; she was simply crazy to see little George. And Dorothy — though that she added as an afterthought.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Vasmer. "Dorothy will be so delighted to see you and show you her boy. We're very proud of him; he's a good baby." She got slowly out of her reclining-chair. "I think we shall find Dorothy in the garden. I'm so glad you came to-day and so can see the garden as well as the baby. I feel as if any day now might be its last; I can't remember when we have gone so late as this at North East without frost. The asters and dahlias are really splendid — dukes and princes now, and one frosty night will transform them all into a lot of dismal battered brown friars — dirty things that you can't have round. The dahlias especially after a frost — they always seem to me like so many Cardinal Wolseys nodding and muttering their melancholy speech to themselves."

This was all too fanciful to interest Hetty; she said, as they proceeded across the lawn past the great copper beech, "Yes, the first hard frost makes a garden a perfect fright."

The gate in the tall privet hedge was open and they passed through it noiselessly on the grass walk. Then there opened out before Hetty a truly regal display of color —gorgeous cactus dahlias with noble blossoms as splendid as any golden chrysanthemum, peony dahlias with blossoms as soft as any rose, asters in masses blue and pink and white, here and there clumps of late lingering phlox and of brilliant helianthus — the grass plots smooth as a carpet, the fountain in the center playing lightly over the marble shoulders of a naked boy, posed with arms outstretched as if for a dive into the pool. In the gay and quiet peacefulness of the inclosure the sound of a man's voice reading blended with the tinkling of the spray. The sound proceeded from a nook in the privet hedge beyond a plum tree; Hetty saw a white-trousered leg projecting; then Mrs. Vasmer called, "See who's here, Dorothy."

The white-trousered leg dropped, the reading ceased abruptly, and from the nook emerged Dorothy, followed in a moment by Sidney Hanford. Hetty gave the young man a keen glance; she knew quite as well as if she had seen it that he was buttoning a manuscript inside his coat. Always she was prejudiced against him; she disliked all hangers-on of married women, and truthfully believed that she would immediately discourage any man who showed a tendency to attach himself to her. Now to Hetty's mind there was a subtle indecency in Hanford's

being here at this time, just as there had been in his frequently accompanying Dorothy to public places at a time when her appearance proclaimed her expectant condition. Hetty resented his presence; unconsciously the happy, eager expression that could make her face attractive vanished, and the look of cool and supercilious composure that Dorothy detested occupied it like a fortress.

She bowed in reply to Dorothy's introduction of Hanford; she did not offer her hand.

"I arrived just this morning," she said. "Of course I wanted to see the baby at once."

"Oh, the baby!" exclaimed Dorothy. "He's all that anybody wants to see now. Nobody comes to see me. That's why I got Mr. Hanford down here; I knew that he would really be more interested in me than in the baby."

Hanford attempted to protest his enthusiasm for the baby, but even this did not propitiate Hetty.

"You're looking very well yourself," she said stiffly to Dorothy.

And Dorothy interpreted this to mean, "Better than you have any right to look, if you were doing your duty by your infant."

She chose to exhibit herself as an advanced type of maternal indifference.

"The nurse is probably feeding him now, so you've come at a good time. I don't have much to do with him myself. Babies at his age are cunning enough, but after all they have n't much variety; they don't satisfy for very long one's social needs — you'll excuse us, won't

you, Mr. Hanford, while we go in and inspect little George."

"Dorothy!" exclaimed Mrs. Vasmer. "What a pose! You know, Hetty, she really thinks there never was such a baby."

"Of course," said Hetty; and then had the unpleasant feeling that Dorothy's laugh was directed both at Mrs. Vasmer and at herself, as if mocking their desire to seem credulous.

But in the presence of the infant Hetty quite recovered her good temper, quite forgot Dorothy's unnatural behavior. The baby had just finished his bottle and was in his best post-prandial mood; his eyes twinkled at the visitor precociously; he lay on his back and flopped his arms about and drooled with obviously sociable intent. Hetty exclaimed over him rapturously, turning now to Mrs. Vasmer, now to Dorothy.

"The living image of his father! Is n't he, Mrs. Vasmer? George's eyes and mouth and nose—yes, and his ears. It's the cunningest little likeness. I always think it nice when the first baby looks like his father and is named for him. — Oh, you darling!"

She bethought herself of the teething-ring; she took it out of its wrapping and shook it in front of the baby's eyes. He watched it gravely for a moment and then had a paroxysm of silent laughter. "Oh, you darling!" said Hetty again, and pressed the ring into the tiny hand, which held it for an instant and then dropped it.

"I must n't keep him any longer from his sleep," said Hetty regretfully. "Those dear little blue eyes!" Thus she took a reluctant farewell; Dorothy had to concede

as a point in her favor that she did not kiss the baby and go perfectly maudlin over him. A sense of justice urged her to an act of graciousness.

"Thank Aunt Hetty for the rattle, baby," she said. "And also for the pretty shoes and the nice blanket and the warm sleeping-bag that your mother had n't the decency to acknowledge."

"Oh, that's all right, Dorothy. I'm glad if they're useful. He's so like George! — To look at me as he did! He's the most precocious baby!"

"I hope he won't be precocious," Dorothy said. "Precocious infants develop into the most trying children."

Mrs. Vasmer asked Hetty if she would not stay to luncheon. No; Hetty was sorry, but she had to hurry back to the Middletons. Besides, Dorothy's last remark had struck her as so profoundly unappreciative of the baby that she thought she had better go before she revealed her feelings, — as if they had not rushed already to her face and revealed themselves, an army in arms.

She took her farewell and moved down the walk to the gate, slender and graceful, and shielding behind the pink parasol the small fortress that she bore upon her shoulders and that was still bristling with the weapons of offense which she imagined she had concealed.

Dorothy returned to the author whose reading had been interrupted. She was fuming; Hetty's frank rejoicing, in which there was to be detected an element of congratulation that the baby was "the image" of George, had been the last annoying episode of an irritating encounter. It was all right that the baby should look like his father,

but it would have been all right, too, if he had happened to look like his mother; there would have been no need for any one to commiserate him.

"That woman always contrives to get on my nerves," Dorothy said bluntly to Hanford. "She makes me want to live up to the worst that I see she's thinking of me. Do people ever affect you in that way?"

Hanford raised his long-lashed eyelids. "I don't think of any one. Of course some people are exasperating. I did n't suppose you ever let yourself be annoyed by them."

She realized that this was the first confidence she had made to him, the first disclosure that she had made of herself, and she wished she might recall it. "If there are people that I don't mind having think me worse than I am, there are others that I want to have think me nicer than I am," she said instantly. "And that's why I wish now I had n't made that horrid remark."

He flushed as he did always when he was both pleased and embarrassed, and she thought how really pretty now his long lashes were against his cheeks.

"I'm glad if you care at all about my approval," he said shyly. "As to that, why, there's one thing I'm sure of, and that is that you're just as nice as I think you."

Stooping she plucked a large purple aster and put it in his button-hole. The young man was aware of an odd, pleasant sensation while her nimble slender fingers played about the breast of his coat, pulling and patting the flower into place. It was almost as if they were caressing him, though he knew of course they were n't.

"You're better at imagining characters than at observing them," she remarked. "Now let's go on with the story."

Reading his story after the interruption Hanford felt that he was not so very good at imagining characters. His people seemed more than ordinarily wooden and unreal. He wondered if she ever again would decorate him with a flower; over and over he revived the sensation of that moment when her nimble slender fingers felt as if they might be caressing him a little — though of course they were n't.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HETTY FREES HER MIND

UPON her arrival at the North Station by the night train from Mount Desert, Hetty at once entered a telephone booth and called up her house at Cohasset. She learned that the children were well; she spoke with each of them in turn, thrilled at again hearing their voices, as were they by the sound of hers. Never before had she been so long away from them. She said that she would come home after luncheon, as she had shopping to do that would occupy her all the morning, urged them to be good children, roused their excitement by suggesting that she might have some presents for them, and rang off reluctantly but thriftily when the time allotted for pay-station conversation had expired.

Then she telephoned to George and caught him just as he was on the point of leaving the house. She asked him to lunch with her at the Touraine and said that she would expatiate upon the charms of his infant.

Though she was a shopper of an investigating and examining habit, Hetty had several times to rouse herself from preoccupation during her morning's tasks. She was not sure just what or how much she ought to say to George.

As was usually the case with Hetty after undergoing such a process of self-examination, she ended by expressing all that was in her mind.

"George," she said, when they were seated at a table

in a corner of the dining-room, "your baby is the cunningest I have ever seen. I believe that if Dorothy's experience with babies were greater, she would realize more fully what a prize he is."

"Dorothy appreciates him, judging from the tone of her letters," said George.

"She does n't get half the fun out of him she might. It's a pity, I think, that Dorothy can't be content just now to let all her interests center about her child."

"I'm sure you're mistaken in thinking they don't."

"If I'm mistaken, then I share a mistake that is pretty general at North East Harbor. People talk about it quite freely. This young Hanford who is making a visit there—why, she ought n't to want to have visitors at this time, she ought n't to want to have the companionship of a man not her husband!"

"Don't be absurd, Hetty," said George impatiently. "Nothing is more innocent."

"I don't mean to imply anything to the contrary. It's just that her wanting to have him round at this time is n't normal or natural; it's only that which excites comment. The Middletons took me on a picnic to one of the islands; they'd invited a number of people, among them Dorothy and her guest. Dorothy and the guest came; they sat together in the boat sailing over, they kept pretty much to themselves on the island, and they were together in the boat coming home. Every one commented on it."

"Then every one is to be despised. Young Hanford is just a boy — naïve, simple, with some literary taste and ambition which I'm not qualified to pronounce upon.

Dorothy is interested in things he has written and has helped him with her criticism."

"But, George, it is n't that people are talking any scandal about her and the young man. It's simply that to behave as she does seems to indicate a carelessness that does n't quite befit motherhood. What people wonder at is that she'd rather play about in these ways than with her baby. She does n't want to be bothered at all with the care of the baby; and unless you interfere the child will be brought up entirely by nurses, will have only a slight knowledge of his mother and a perfunctory regard for her, and will very speedily grow away from her influence and yours."

"I think you are giving yourself quite unnecessary concern about the matter, Hetty."

"I'm sorry if I've offended you by speaking. I realize that Dorothy does n't like me; I seem to antagonize her. You may be sure, George, that I've been very careful not to indicate to her any disapproval of her course."

"Naturally. After all, Hetty, there is more than one way of bringing up a child. While Dorothy is at her mother's, it is best for her to get as much rest and recreation as possible and build up her strength; the baby does not suffer from any neglect. When she comes back to Boston, you will find that she will be just as devoted a mother as you are yourself."

"I don't pretend to any superior virtue," declared Hetty, "only to superior experience. And if I've said more than I should, please try to forgive me, George."

She was truly contrite; she felt that her self-imposed mission had been injudicious and had resulted in failure.

What she had hoped to accomplish she did not exactly know, but she had thought that if George's eyes were opened he might perform some beneficial operation which she vaguely termed to herself "putting his foot down." It was her opinion that Dorothy needed to be controlled with a firm hand; she had hoped to show George the necessity for exercising it.

But of course George loved and admired the girl and could n't be made to see the necessity. Hetty refrained from repeating what Fanny Middleton had told her; Dorothy had said to Fanny that she liked to see the baby when he was being given his bath, but that she never wanted or intended to bathe him herself, and both Fanny and Hetty agreed in regarding such a statement as symptomatic; a woman who did n't want to bathe her baby with her own hands! Evidently Dorothy meant to be an ultra-modern type of mother. And that, in Hetty's opinion, was about the most pernicious use a woman could make of herself.

Sitting at the table, Hetty felt sorry for George. It would be cruel if he was to find that he was mismated — if, after the way in which he had pulled himself together and was making himself count in the community, he should fail to receive true support from his wife. To see things being done just wrong, by a person just selfish and obstinate enough to persevere in doing them wrong because those methods best suited her pleasure and convenience, must be hard for a man who loved his child and wished to maintain his love for his wife. Hetty thought that George had lost much of his natural gayety, and she did not believe it was due entirely to the

seriousness of his professional responsibilities. Doubtless he felt in his heart as she did about Dorothy's neglect of her maternal privileges, even though bound by a sense of loyalty to deny it. And Hetty, smitten by this thought, wished that by her own censorious speech she had not added to his burden.

Though not given to demonstrativeness and disapproving highly of it in public places, Hetty could not help conveying to George a special sign of affection when they were parting. George was regretting that he could not accompany her to the station and put her on the train; his office hour called him. Hetty, about to enter a cab, turned suddenly and taking his arm pressed it and clung to it.

"Dear old brother," she said; "I know I'm awfully narrow-minded; do try to forgive me." She released him and stepped into the cab. "If you ever have a free night or a Sunday, do come to Cohasset."

George waved his hand cheerfully, but the moment that Hetty was gone cheerfulness vanished from his face. To be aware of an unworthiness in his wife was to be saddened; to learn that others were aware of it and were commenting on it was to be deprived even of the dignity of sadness. He walked the short distance to the corner slowly, with downcast eyes. At the corner, waiting for an opportunity to cross to the Common, he saw a cab, driven at more than ordinary speed, swing round from Tremont into Boylston Street. He recognized Graham Rappallo sitting inside, gazing straight ahead, and looking, George thought, even in that preoccupied instant, as if he did not see anything.

CHAPTER XXIX

ROSAMOND

IN the evening of that day George heard from Graham Rappallo, over the telephone, that Rosamond had a son. There was little joyfulness in the father's announcement. The baby, premature by two months, weighed only two and a quarter pounds; its spark of life flickered feebly; Rosamond's condition was critical. As the days went by there came no reassuring message. The baby still lived, yet from moment to moment its grasp on life seemed precarious. In Rosamond's case no improvement was manifest. Finally Dr. Armazet was called into consultation. From the house of the patient Dr. Armazet telephoned to George, summoning him to come at once with surgical supplies. What the surgeon said was ominous; George made his preparations with rapid fingers and a heavy heart.

It was mid-afternoon of the blowy October day when he alighted from the train at the Dover Station. Graham himself was waiting for him, holding in a restless big bay that scorned the harness and danced for a run across country. Sleepless nights and torturing fears had made their mark on Graham's face; a dull tone overlaid its healthy dark color, and lines had been harrowed about the mouth and eyes. But he smiled and reached down to George a steady hand.

George helped the station-master to stow the small trunk of supplies behind the seat and then mounted

beside Graham. The horse was off at a leap. To George's question about Rosamond, Graham replied, "She's facing it bravely. She would. Dr. Armazet has encouraged her. He is hopeful, I think. Dr. Parsons agrees that an operation is necessary. The question is whether she has vitality enough to stand it. And if the baby should die —"

For an instant in the eyes turned towards him George read anguish. Then he had only the profile view of Graham's face, which in its immobility seemed to express apathy under torture.

It was torture that George shared. While he sat in the train the thought of Rosamond so stricken had brought her before him with a poignant nearness, a poignant tenderness; his dear Rosamond of old; he saw her as she had looked entering the church to be married, as she had looked when her startled soft eyes fell on him; he could not identify that bright and gay creature with one whose destiny was tragedy and doom. Yet already destiny was brooding over her while she lay between life and death, destiny inert and uncompassionate. If, as Graham said, the baby should die! —

The dried grasses of the uplands ran in long columns under the wind, darted from shadow into sunlight. A knoll of oaks stood out in mellow bronze. Maples and sumach and birches flamed and flashed and fluttered pennons. Nature seemed high-spirited and playful, the breeze went tilting impudently by, and sang in the trees. But a cornfield, full of withered, uncut stalks, was out of key and gave forth, while the horse trotted by, a faint and sombre melody.

Ten minutes later George was in Rosamond's room. She had asked to see him alone. The sight of her brought his emotion to the surface; he set his lips to keep them from quivering, he clasped her hand in silence. The pressure of it was warm and strong; the pallor and thinness of her face served to bring out more strikingly for him the soft lustre of her eyes.

"I'm glad you 're here to help me, George."

"Thank you, Rosamond. You can have complete faith in Dr. Armazet. Before you realize it, you'll be out of ether —"

"Yes, I know." She still clung to his hand. "I don't want to die; I shall make a fight. My little son needs me. I have n't been of much use to him — bringing him into the world so unprepared — I have seen him only twice — poor little mite! They don't dare show him to me; it is dangerous to disturb him. I must n't ask to see him now. They feed him with a medicine dropper. I shall never know what it might be to have him at my breast. And I had looked forward to that. Oh, I want to be a good mother to him — I want to make up to him for this bad start; I feel that I can. George, you and Dr. Armazet must make me live."

"Oh, yes, I promise it," George cried.

She smiled and let go his hand. He was leaving the room when she called him back. She motioned to him to bend over her, and then in a low voice she said, —

"If it goes wrong, George, you'll tell Graham why I did n't ask to see my baby?"

"Yes, Rosamond. But it won't go wrong."

He declared it passionately.

That night Dr. Armazet and George slept but little; one or the other was constantly in attendance at Rosamond's bedside, keeping her under morphia, noting her pulse, and her temperature, trying to soothe and encourage her in the intervals of consciousness and agony. Towards morning her pulse became suddenly weaker, her temperature mounted, she muttered deliriously, there were alarming symptoms of sinking. Together George and Dr. Armazet fought off the creeping enemy. Rosamond returned to consciousness and agony. Her lips moved in silence. George bent over and asked her what she would say.

"This torture," she whispered. "Oh, I must n't cry, I must n't scream; it might wake my little baby."

"No, you need n't be afraid of that," George said.

She looked at him with frightened eyes. "Is my baby dead?"

"No, no, no!" George cried, putting his hand on her forehead. "He's all right."

"You would say that to me anyway."

"But it's true! Rosamond, dear; the baby's doing finely."

He saw that he had not dispelled her doubt, her dread; the wild, frightened look remained in her eyes. Soon she was again in delirium. Morphia quieted her, and she slept until the light streamed in between the slats of the blinds. Then she awoke, to the same terror as before. Dr. Armazet added his assurances to those of George, but she only said, "You would n't tell me the truth."

"We'll get your husband; you'll believe your husband," Dr. Armazet replied.

Graham entered, eagerness and hope and love smiling on his face and shining in his eyes. He fell upon his knees beside the bed; he kissed her gently, tenderly, but she did not respond to his kisses.

"Graham," she said, in a low voice that reached George standing by the door, "you are all trying to keep it from me."

"What, dearest?"

"About the baby. Is the baby dead?"

"No, no! Why, a moment ago he was crying, a great lusty cry, the best he's given yet. Wait; I'll open the door and if he's still at it you may hear him."

Then from a room across the hall sounded a tiny wail; it came to the mother's ears. The terror passed from her eyes.

"Will he hurt himself crying, Graham?"

"Not a bit; he's hungry. There; he's getting his breakfast now; he's stopped."

Contentment settled upon her face; she closed her eyes and fell asleep. Graham tiptoed from the room, Dr. Armazet behind him.

"I think the worst is over," the surgeon said. "We can't be sure, but everything seems hopeful."

George sat quietly watching Rosamond's peaceful face. The time when he had tried to take her from her husband seemed remote. Purified of illicit passion he looked at Rosamond now with tenderness and reverence. Courage, devotion, self-sacrifice, fortitude in anguish—was she not a mother for a child! Though he strove to bar the entrance, a devastating comparison invaded his mind.

CHAPTER XXX

DOROTHY WISHES HER MOTHER TO BE HAPPY

IN the middle of October, George brought Dorothy and the baby and the nurse home from North East Harbor. Mrs. Vasmer remained to close up the house at her leisure. In the stateroom on the night train the baby cried for two hours; George in his berth outside slept undisturbed, but the nurse was jaded and Dorothy was cross the next morning. The baby screamed at being dressed, at having his bonnet put on, at being wrapped in his shawl. "Goodness, he's the horrid child!" Dorothy exclaimed. "The next time he goes traveling it won't be with me!"

George had examined him with careful eyes. The child was a sound and active baby, but irritable; his fretfulness aroused George's sympathy and arrayed his feelings against Dorothy when she was irritable. He could not give expression to them, but while Dorothy was exclaiming angrily he thought, "Poor little fellow, you would n't be a horrid child if your mother were doing her part by you." An increase of tenderness towards his offspring was accompanied by a hardening of feeling towards his wife.

George had done his best to get the house in readiness for his wife's return; the rugs had been cleaned, the floors had been swept, pictures and furniture had been unswathed, dusted, and placed in position, a room on

the third floor had been fitted up as a nursery. And Dorothy pleased George by looking round and saying, "Things look quite well, don't they, George? Did you do all this? I think you're wonderful!" But after breakfast the baby cried again and trunks and bags had to be unpacked, and Dorothy exclaimed to her husband, "Oh, what a nasty little house! How I hate to come home!"

He looked so crestfallen that she added relentingly, "It was well enough when there were only two of us. But with the baby and the baby's nurse — there's no place to put things, and he cries so, and it gets on my nerves."

He patted her shoulder and said, "Well, dear, we'll find places for everything pretty soon and the baby won't always be crying, and you won't always be having nerves."

"I wish you would n't call it that," she replied. "You're very unsympathetic, George."

He protested the injustice of the charge; inwardly he sighed for the peaceful precincts of the club and for his vanished freedom. But at once he was ashamed of the longing; after all it was not yet three months since the baby had been born and he should willingly be tolerant of his wife's fretfulness.

Nevertheless he welcomed the telephone call that summoned him to a patient's bedside. And for a few days his happiest hours were not those that he passed at home. There was trouble with servants, new ones had to be hired, the baby's diet had to be altered, the baby cried and Dorothy complained. And all the time George nursed a secret bitterness; it might have been so differ-

ent had his wife been the right kind of mother; the kind of mother that a man may expect the woman he marries to be.

But at last the domestic annoyances were smoothed out, the baby began to thrive on the new diet prescribed, and Dorothy's cheerfulness returned. She was anxiously waiting to regain her formerly slim figure in order to buy herself some new clothes. She proposed to discard her mourning garments and have a gay winter; she felt that after such long abstinence from social pleasures she deserved it. And although she did not mention it to George, she had an idea that by a brilliant reëntry into society, and with the assistance of many new and handsome gowns, she could recover the dominion over him that she was uneasily aware at times of having lost. She had led a grubby kind of life too long; it had cost her the prestige to which she was entitled.

If she had confided her thought and her hope to George, he might have been touched. But he did not imagine that she cared particularly any longer for such homage as he had rendered in the past. She had begun to hold him off, to assume a new formality; it was because his manner towards her had wounded her. His gentleness and forbearance were too studied; she would have liked better to be scolded and then to be caught into his arms. But perhaps when he saw her in her new clothes, at balls and dinners, courted again by other men, she would take on a new value in his eyes. And then she would be very careful to see that he never again should hold her lightly, as he seemed to do now.

It was necessary for her to overcome her mother's

scruples and inclinations. Mrs. Vasmer wished to remain in mourning another year.

"But, mother," Dorothy said, "how can I go out if you stay in deep mourning? And besides I was hoping that you'd do some entertaining for us."

"It seems to me, Dorothy, I should be lacking in respect —"

"Now, mother, you know father would n't want you and me to go on shutting ourselves off from the world. People can't always carry their sorrows with them, and so long as we think of father and try to do as he would have us do, why should n't we get what pleasure we can out of life?"

"I don't feel that I would find much enjoyment now in entertaining," said Mrs. Vasmer. "When your father was here to help me, it was different."

"George and I would help you and take as much responsibility as possible off your hands. You need n't give any big entertainments — just dinners and theatre parties and things of that kind."

Mrs. Vasmer made one more feeble remonstrance. "I don't feel as if I should have the heart ever to wear colors again."

"It's because you've worn black so long that you feel so. Black is n't good for people's nerves or spirits. I know I need to escape from it — and so do you, mother. Come with me to-morrow, and we'll go shopping."

A long habit of yielding in matters on which Dorothy had set her heart had deprived Mrs. Vasmer of the power of resistance. Accompanying her daughter to the shops, she stood sponsor for Dorothy's numerous ex-

travagant purchases and committed several on her own behalf, with a sense that each one constituted a sacrilege.

"I shall never have the strength of mind to change from black to these," Mrs. Vasmer said; and Dorothy replied: —

"Oh, yes, you will. In fact, we must set a day when we shall appear together, out of mourning. How about five weeks from to-day?"

Mrs. Vasmer thought that was too soon, but Dorothy pointed out that once you had made up your mind to do a thing, it was wise to do it with as little delay as possible. And on the day that she had named Dorothy in her new and becoming brown suit and hat with blue feather walked to her mother's house and there, after much entreaty and argument, induced Mrs. Vasmer to discard her widow's weeds and put on her new gray suit and gray hat. Then she summoned her mother's victoria and compelled her to drive about the Back Bay and make calls.

"Now that the ice has been broken, it won't be hard for you," Dorothy said. "And, of course, now you can't return to black — which is a comfort. You look twice as well and three times as young, now that you're out of mourning."

She kissed her mother as if in confirmation of the compliment.

Mrs. Vasmer was herself not insensible to an improvement of spirits. Her first consciousness of daring and guilt having passed, she acknowledged to herself an interest and pleasure in her appearance. The black in

which she had been draped and shrouded and immured had subdued and imprisoned her spirits; now, free once more, they shyly fluttered their wings. After Dorothy had gone, she stood before the pier-glass in her room, turning about and admiring the flow and fall of her dress, the poise of her hat; it was the first time since her husband's death that she had done this with a sense of pleasure. Although she had unsuccessfully fought a tendency to stoutness, her face retained still a youthful color if not a youthful freshness. Yes, it would be pleasant to live in the world again — and perhaps people would not always remember that she was a grandmother.

She was a simple-minded woman and old-fashioned in her piety; she knelt beside her bed and besought her husband's spirit to believe that he was not forgotten. And then she prayed for grace and resignation with which to bear the fading of her bloom, for strength of mind to raise her above follies and frivolities unbecoming to her age, and for unselfishness and cheerfulness so that she might not be a killjoy to a younger generation.

Meanwhile Dorothy had walked home, in her brown suit and hat with a blue feather, very well pleased with her mother for exhibiting such docility. "She'll be much happier," Dorothy assured herself, "much happier in every way." And she felt entitled to considerable credit for having brought her mother to this happier outlook upon life.

She had been at home but a few minutes when Sidney Hanford called, and she went down rather excited and curious to see what impression she would make on him

in her new clothes. It was very gratifying; she was aware of the instant pleasure on his face.

"Oh," he said, "I hope you'll never wear black again."

"One does n't do it from preference," she answered.

"Yes, and so all the more reason for my hope! It always hurt me to see you in black. I remembered how you looked the first time I saw you on the steamer, and I felt that you ought always to look bright and gay, as you did then; there ought never to be anything about you to suggest sorrow or unhappiness."

"But when we can't escape sorrow and unhappiness —"

"That's just it; I want you to escape them; I can't bear to think that you don't, and wearing black is a proclamation of sorrow. But now I can imagine you as never anything but happy."

"Then what you imagine about me may be more important to you than what I really am?"

He hesitated a moment. "I can only answer that by saying that you really must be all that I imagine you."

She could not be unaware of the deepened feeling in his voice, so suddenly, even involuntarily, expressed; she was not unaware of a responsive kindling of emotion beneath the surface; she feared that she might betray it, she hoped that he would divine it.

In the moment of silence that followed she was sure that he had read her thoughts, vibrated to her emotion. She was especially sure of it because of late in the work that he had been reading to her passages had revealed an

almost uncanny understanding of feminine states of mind; sometimes it occurred to her that she was seeing herself interpreted. The talk between them became constrained; Hanford soon took his leave. After he had gone Dorothy felt agitated and unhappy. She could not account for her feelings to herself; she thought that he with his insight could elucidate them to her. But of course he would never have the opportunity.

When George came in, he did not seem to notice his wife's dress; he made no comment on it. He kissed her as he passed on his way to the window-seat, where he stretched himself full length. She put down the book on which she had been trying to fix her attention.

"Tired, George?"

"Yes, rather."

"I thought you must be — not to say anything about the way I look!"

He turned his head. "Oh, yes. A new dress; it 's very pretty — very becoming. So you're coming out of mourning?"

It was characteristic of the relations which had existed between them since her return to Boston that he should have been ignorant of her intention.

"Yes. I hope you're glad. It's strange you did n't notice."

"I must have been too preoccupied. To tell the truth, in the mood I'm in, your black would be more appropriate."

"What has happened?"

"Oh, an operation failed. Nobody's fault — but it was useless. A boy of fifteen — only child; a tumor of

the brain suddenly developed. We knew it was almost hopeless. I had to see the mother afterwards."

"Poor woman!" said Dorothy.

"A tragedy like that haunts me now more than it used to. I can't help thinking always, 'What if it happened to us!' Seeing so much pain and grief and suffering I sometimes wonder if any one escapes."

"Don't have such thoughts; don't put them into my head! Of course our little boy is going to be all right, always."

"Yes, of course he is. There's no reason to fear that it will be otherwise."

But all that evening George remained under a cloud of depression. He admitted that he could not put from him thoughts of the grief-crazed mother, the stricken father who tried vainly to support and comfort her. At dinner he sat silent; afterwards he lay again on the window-seat and rested with closed eyes until at last he roused himself and descended to his study.

Dorothy had tried to interest him in her plans for a gay winter, but the attention that he gave her was so obviously perfunctory that she soon ceased, and determined rather sullenly to be just as silent as he was. And when he left her and went downstairs she felt angry. Men who were good husbands did not bring home their professional troubles and worries and sorrows and convert an atmosphere of cheerfulness into one of gloom. Of course doctors saw a lot of suffering, but all the more reason for their not dwelling on it afterwards. And, as a matter of fact, all the good doctors and surgeons that she knew were an unusually jolly set of men. Even if

George could n't get away from his share in a tragic experience, there was absolutely no excuse for his scaring her and harrowing her up with premonitions and presentiments about the baby. He simply could n't miss a chance to try to make her feel that she had not been a good mother to her child.

She felt piqued because he had been so indifferent to the epoch-making change in her dress, so casual in his comment on her appearance, so unresponsive to her statement of plans and expectations for the winter. His attitude simply meant that she and her life had become of secondary importance to him. Of less importance, indeed, than to Sidney Hanford, who had been actually thrilled at seeing her again in colors, who had become radiant in the thought of her once more gay and happy as a young girl is happy.

CHAPTER XXXI

PHASES OF CONTENTMENT

SLOWLY Rosamond recovered her strength; slowly the tiny infant gained in weight and vigor. Although the doctor would not express any sanguine hope and said that not until the first of the year could the baby's health be regarded as assured, with each week that passed his manner took on confidence and gave encouragement. And when at last Rosamond herself was able to share the nurse's duties, to feed and bathe and dress the little thing, she felt that death could not now rob her of her child, such watchful care she would give him, such devotion — and so scrupulously would she abstain from indulgence in forbidden maternal pleasures. Although with her heart and soul and lips and fingers she longed to caress the soft little body, she never cuddled the child in her arms, she never kissed him, she never laughed over him or talked to him or played with him; quietly, silently, in a manner as business-like as it was gentle, she did for him what was required and then left him to himself. The nurse commented admiringly on her self-control. "Oh," said Rosamond, "but don't I comfort myself every day with thinking how some time I shall hug him and hug him in my arms!"

To Graham's campaign for election to the legislature she did not give close interest; she was too preoccupied with the baby; all her power of concentration had been

narrowed down to him. Sometimes Graham would talk to her about the issues depending on the election or about the character of the campaign being waged by his opponent; and always, after a little while, Rosamond would have to confess that she had not been listening and that there seemed to be something the matter with her brain because she could never be interested in things as formerly. Graham assured her that there was nothing the matter with it and that after the long period of nervous strain and anxiety was over she would find herself once more alert to outside affairs. He himself carried anxiety less lightly than his wife. His heart was not in electioneering; after two speeches he refused to continue on the stump; he left his political fate to his friends and to public sentiment. Dread lest the baby should die and terror of what might then befall Rosamond oppressed him at all times. He tried to arrange his life so that he should be always within telephone call — and when he was at his office or away from home he never heard the telephone bell ring without a sinking at the heart, a weakening of the knees. The doctor had told him that the baby might seem perfectly well one minute and collapse the next; Graham wondered at Rosamond's increasing serenity and was almost frightened by it, fearing the shattering effect should disaster come.

In the election he was victorious by a vote of about two to one; his popularity in the town and the surrounding country had made public appearances unnecessary to his success.

Dorothy read the newspaper announcement of the

vote and telephoned her congratulations to Rosamond. Since her return from North East Harbor she had visited Rosamond once, and now asked when she might come again. Rosamond said, "Any day; come out for luncheon any day." Then Dorothy, reckoning up her engagements, announced that she could not come for two weeks. When the day arrived, she had found it necessary to sacrifice the acceptance of an attractive luncheon invitation, but she felt sorry for Rosamond, isolated on her hilltop and unable to go anywhere, and kept her engagement with her as a duty rather than as a pleasure.

At any rate, Rosamond appreciated her new clothes; it was a pleasure to have any one so intelligently appreciative, so mildly envious. For Rosamond declared that she had n't been able to get anything new for the autumn and did n't know when she could get anything new for the winter; she might have to wear her last year's things right through until spring. After all, it did n't matter much to one living out in the country, though sometimes one got rather tired of one's self.

"Yes, that's the way I felt, wearing black," said Dorothy. "It got to be a perfect tyranny after a time. But I don't see what's to prevent you from getting new clothes, Rosamond. You can surely come into town whenever you want to; it is n't as if you were nursing the baby."

"I should n't dare to be away from him; I'm never away from the house for longer than an hour."

"But with a trained nurse here all the time if anything should happen —"

"It does n't make any difference; I should n't dare to

go away; I should n't be happy. In my place you'd understand."

"No, I'm sure I should n't. I could n't endure being so tied down — all those months beforehand, and now these months afterwards; I should go mad."

"Not if you felt that staying at home might make the difference between life and death."

"Yes, but how can you feel that, Rosamond?"

"I can't tell you, but I do feel it. I feel that the more I do for the baby now, the better his chance. Already it seems to me he knows me and likes to have me handle him. Perhaps it's only my imagination, but I think he likes me better than the nurse. And then it's the mental feeling — that if anything should happen and I were here I could fight for him, whereas if anything should happen, with me away, I could n't. So I'm contented to sit at home these days."

Sitting now in front of the living-room fire and plying her knitting-needles in the manufacture of a filmy baby garment, Rosamond looked, indeed, as if she cherished no grudge against her fate. The color of returning health was in her cheeks, in her hazel eyes was the calmness of faith and the brightness of hope, her lips wore both a new sweetness and a new resoluteness. Dorothy looking at her wondered jealously what it was that Rosamond had gained and she had missed in marriage and in child-bearing.

The question in her mind prompted her to ask wistfully, —

"Rosamond, don't you ever sometimes wish you were unmarried — just a girl again? I do. Not, of course,

because George is n't the best kind of a husband, but just because — well, don't you ever have the feeling, Rosamond?"

"I used to; I suppose every one has it at times. But I have n't had it since I first knew the baby was coming."

"That does n't seem to have made me any less subject to it," confessed Dorothy. "There was something that it seems to me I had every minute before I was married, and that I've never had since, — something that was like the breath of life to me, — and that was excitement, — excitement over the mystery of the future, excitement in looking forward to every trifling thing, excitement in wondering whether the men I was meeting and the men I was seeing would really like me, excitement in wondering which of them all would finally prove to be the one! Don't you know what I mean, Rosamond?"

"Of course I do. And I think every girl must in a way regret the passing of that excitement — that mystery."

"Regret it! Oh, Rosamond, sometimes it seems to me almost as if my life were over. It is all so settled, so stupidly, tiresomely settled! It used to be so innocent to want men to like me, and to wonder how much they might — and now it is n't innocent any more, and yet I want it just the same! A married woman can't have excitements and thrills and be a good married woman, can she, Rosamond?"

"It's wiser certainly for her not to have them."

"And yet it's nature, it's instinct!"

"Sometimes we have to fight against nature and in-

stinct. I suppose the real value and reward of life is in promoting the life and usefulness of others. So why should we feel sad because our girlhood days, with all their shallow excitements and silly thrills, are over? I think that women more than men need to learn resignation; it's more important to their usefulness. 'Whoso seeketh his life' and so on; it's even truer if you change 'his' to 'her.'"

"I can't be a passive sort of person," said Dorothy. "I'm not ready to retire from the world and live just in and for my child and all that kind of thing."

"Well," said Rosamond, "I feel that it's a perfectly good career to be a mother. I don't think it's necessary for you to withdraw from the world; it is, temporarily, for me. But I think when we go into it, we must have a different point of view from the old one. We ought to accumulate observation and experience for the benefit of our children instead of sensations for ourselves. We should n't insist on always viewing ourselves as heroines of romance — and we should n't get discontented if others don't view us as such."

"I wonder if you're one half as philosophic as you sound," said Dorothy. "I must say, I exclaim with Keats, 'Oh, for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!'"

"There's not much harm in having sensations so long as you don't make them," replied Rosamond. "Now I must see to the baby's feeding; I'll soon be back."

Dorothy asked if she might not come, too; she wanted to see the baby.

"I'm sorry, but he is n't allowed to see any one yet. We still have to be very careful with him."

Dorothy pondered on Rosamond's point of view, wondered if she really was as happy as her words and her face indicated, remembered that in the old days she had been as gay and fly-away as any one. She decided that probably Graham's interesting life and prospects inspired much of Rosamond's contentment, and during luncheon she tried to ascertain just how far these factors affected her point of view.

"Here I am and I've not mentioned Graham's election," she said. "Were n't you excited, Rosamond, and are n't you glad he won?"

"I don't think either of us was much excited," Rosamond answered. "It was n't a very exalted office, you know."

"Still it's a beginning in politics, and so few good men go in for politics! Probably you'll be living in Washington some day. What fun it would be to have a brilliant social and political career! I'm sure you and Graham will have it, Rosamond."

"We're not looking ahead to anything of the kind. My one idea is to stay right here and see the little boy get strong and grow healthy — and I hope, of course, I shall have other children."

"Goodness, I don't want to think of having others now," said Dorothy. "Some time, perhaps, but I want a long rest and lots of fun."

"Well," said Rosamond, "I can understand that, too, and I don't doubt that you'll have a good time and be as much a belle as you ever were."

"I feel almost as nervous as when I was a débutante. But I have some lovely new dresses, Rosamond. I wish you could come into town; I should love to show them to you."

"I wish I could; I should love to see them. Tell me about them."

And Rosamond listened, quite eagerly; Dorothy observed the wistfulness of her gaze, the interest of her questions.

"She loves pretty things as much as she ever did," Dorothy thought. "She never before wore last year's dresses and looked a little dowdy; she does n't like that. And she likes a good time as much as she ever did. It's mean, I know, but I can't help feeling glad that I can make her feel a little discontented. I hate to think that life is so much happier and more satisfactory for other people than for me."

So she talked on vivaciously of her new clothes and the new styles, of the invitations that she had received, of the promise for a gay winter, of the dinners that her mother was nominally and she really to give, of the new game, bridge whist, that every one was learning and going mad over; and finally, when she rose to take her departure Rosamond said, —

"It is good to hear about the world again. You don't know what a splendid time you've given me, Dorothy. Do come again soon."

She kissed her and Dorothy felt instantly ashamed of the moment's satisfaction in troubling Rosamond's contentment, instantly pleased at having brought a ray of color into the poor girl's dull life.

"I shall think of you sitting at your dinner table to-night and wearing — which one? The lavender and rose?" said Rosamond.

"No, the yellow one to-night," replied Dorothy, laughing.

She wondered how Sidney Hanford would like her in that new yellow gown; she rather hoped she might dazzle him. He had telephoned that morning to ask if he might come in to dinner and afterwards read her something he had written.

She had not said anything to Rosamond about Sidney Hanford. Well, there was nothing to say.

CHAPTER XXXII

A NECESSARY DEPARTURE AND AN UNNECESSARY FAREWELL

SIDNEY HANFORD passed Christmas with his brother in New Hampshire. He reluctantly declined an invitation from Mrs. Vasmer — he knew whom to thank for it — to dine on that evening at her house. The claims of fraternal duty and avuncular privilege withheld him from gratifying his own inclination — which was to see Dorothy Brandon wherever and whenever opportunity offered. Christmas had always been a family day, and he recognized his brother William as now the head of the family; it was his duty on this day of the year to pay William and his wife the respect due to the head. Moreover, it was his privilege to observe his nephew, now old enough to be transported with delight over Christmas presents and Christmas food. Sidney had an affection for the little boy and had made a careful selection of mechanical toys for him; he had especially pinned his hopes on a traveling dump-cart which conveyed a load of sand up an inclined track and discharged it from the top of a derrick — scuttling down again to reload the same sand and again hurl it from the height.

He passed a very domestic Christmas — playing on the floor with his enthralled nephew most of the day and causing his sister-in-law to declare that he was too nice a person to go much longer unmarried. She endeavored

to elicit from him information about the girls he knew in Boston, and professed skepticism when he stated that he did n't know any.

"Your friend that you visited at North East — has n't she put you in the way of making other acquaintances?" asked Elizabeth.

"She's been in mourning until recently," Sidney answered. "Oh, I have met a few people at her house, and probably I shall meet others. But I'm too busy with my work to be interested in girls — except as subjects."

Elizabeth said she always distrusted a man who talked like that.

She and her husband accompanied Sidney on his return to Boston. Every winter they went to Boston for a week of revelry; they took a room at the Parker House, and Elizabeth shopped and William looked up various Dartmouth friends; they dined at different places every night and went to a theater every evening. On this occasion Sidney undertook for one evening to play the host; dinner at the Touraine, a box at the theater, and then supper at the Touraine represented the scope of his entertainment, to which he invited George and Dorothy Brandon. Dorothy came without her husband; George had been called off on a case — "as usual," Dorothy said.

Sidney felt that it was one of the pleasantest evenings of his life. He enjoyed the sensation of providing pleasure for William and Elizabeth and Dorothy — especially Dorothy. It enlivened his spirits to observe how well William and Elizabeth got on with Dorothy, how charmed Dorothy apparently was with William and Elizabeth. He thought that Elizabeth looked really

very pretty in her pink dress, with her swansdown cloak thrown back, and her face animated and excited; and he was sure that Dorothy, gay and lively, with her musical laugh and her shining eyes, was quite the loveliest creature in the world. She was merry and kind and fascinating, and it was no wonder that William found her so enchanting; he could hardly take his eyes off her during dinner, and in the box between the acts she and he talked together earnestly, confidentially. Sidney was proud of the success of his little party, sorry as a young débutante is sorry when the pleasant evening came to an end; to close the carriage door upon the radiant Dorothy saddened his spirits.

It did not cause him at all the same pang to hear the radiant Elizabeth's "Good-night."

William and Elizabeth remained in Boston only two more days; on the last night of their stay Sidney came to dine with them. After dinner Elizabeth said, "I'm going up to my room; I know that you and Will want to have a talk, Sidney."

It was in vain that Sidney protested; it struck him momentarily as odd that William did not support his protest. He supposed there was some business matter to be discussed, and after Elizabeth had gone waited for his brother to speak.

William seemed in no haste to come to the point. He presented Sidney with a very admirable cigar and prevailed on him to warm his already comfortable person with a pony of brandy. Then William remarked, —

"Elizabeth and I both think Mrs. Brandon is an uncommonly attractive woman."

"Yes," Sidney agreed. "She is."

"She's been married how long?"

"A little over a year."

"Visiting her at North East last summer you came to know her pretty well, I suppose. You see a good deal of her now?"

"I see her occasionally."

"About how often?"

"I don't know."

"Two or three times a week, perhaps? Whenever you feel the need of society, of companionship, you're likely to go to her?"

"Confound it, Will, you're not examining witnesses. Your questions are irritating. What are you driving at?"

"I don't mean to be irritating, Sid. But it has occurred to me that perhaps without knowing it you are getting too fond of that attractive lady."

Sidney flushed. "Mrs. Brandon is one of the best friends I have, and in that way I'm fond of her. I go to her for criticism and help in my work. That means we have come to know each other pretty well."

"It means trouble," said William. "There's only one woman to whom a man is justified in carrying his problems and opening up his thoughts, and that's his wife — or the woman that he hopes to make his wife. If he chooses any other woman for such a purpose and she responds at all, he will get too much interested in her or she in him, or each in the other. Now, Sid, that's happened between you and Mrs. Brandon."

"I don't think of her in any improper way. I like her,

I admire her — but it's perfectly absurd for you to draw any such inference!"

"Sid, you're in love with that woman, and all that would be needed to make you realize it would be to find that she was in love with you."

"Then I am certainly protected from enlightenment."

"On the contrary, I think you — and she — are in grave danger of it. Elizabeth thinks so, too."

"What nonsense!"

"My dear Sid, any one could have seen that at dinner the other night she looked at you with the eyes of more than ordinary friendship — and you were unconscious of how you looked at her. It was apparent enough on both sides. Elizabeth spoke of it to me afterwards; I had carefully not suggested it to her. But that was n't all. At the theater Mrs. Brandon talked to me about you — said you were the most interesting and attractive man she knew, told me what confidence she had in your future, how fortunate she thought herself in seeing so much of you when you were, so to speak, on the threshold —"

"You don't suppose she would talk like that if she had any feeling of the kind you suspect!"

"I don't think she's quite aware of the consequence of her interest. But it will grow if you let it, and yours will grow if you let it. In the case of two persons who are so sympathetic and so attracted to each other, that is inevitable — if they continue to see each other."

Sidney was silent a moment. "Does Elizabeth really think she cares about me?" he asked.

"The first thing that Elizabeth said to me after your theater party was, 'She's in love with him.'"

Out of their stormy incredulity a flash of pleased surprise darted from Sidney's eyes.

"Elizabeth is not always imagining flirtations and romances," continued William. "She's extremely level-headed and would n't ever be suspicious of any ordinary prosaic friendship. But you see, Sid, your eyes and Mrs. Brandon's are too expressive; an observant person could n't fail to read them."

"Why do you tell me this if you think it's dangerous?"

"Because it can't have gone so far that you will refuse to heed the warning. If you stay on in Boston you will continue to see her, — probably more and more often, — and the effect will be to make both you and her discontented and unhappy; you will unsettle her life, and she yours. It would be only a question of time before you came between her and her husband. It 's your duty to go away."

"If she's unhappy at home and gets some pleasure from her friendship with me —"

"Poppycock!" said William. "Sentimental rubbish. In the first place, have you any reason to believe that her husband is unkind or abusive?"

"No, but rather inattentive —"

"Even after marriage men have their work to do. Wives must not be exacting."

"I have no reason to think she's unhappy with her husband," said Sidney, after a pause. "So I have no reason to think it's incumbent on me to remove myself."

"Elizabeth thinks it is," replied William. "She sees from the woman's point of view. First you argue that

you should n't go if she's unhappy; now you argue that you should n't go unless she's unhappy."

Sidney was silent.

"I realize that I'm urging you to make a sacrifice," William continued. "I'm urging you to put forth your strength when every inclination is towards the course of weakness. But there's nothing to be gained by lingering on here. Sidney, if you are really an artist, your art ought to be more to you than any woman. Go to New York; you're much more likely to get recognition living and working there than if you stay in Boston."

The prestige of the elder brother, magnified since he had become head of the family, compelled a respectful weighing of his words. William saw that he had made an impression; he closed his plea by saying, —

"Don't make up your mind at once. Think the situation over. If you do and are honest with yourself, you'll see that there's only one true course to pursue. If you don't take it, you'll be laying up trouble for yourself and for her."

"I will think it over," Sidney promised.

He saw William and Elizabeth take their departure for New Hampshire the next day; he was aware that they both looked at him with a hopeful expression in their eyes. But he was not ready to satisfy their questioning interest, — although he knew that he should do what they wished. It might be that they were quite mistaken in regarding him as a menace to Dorothy's happiness, but it was rather flattering to think that he occupied a position of such importance. And on the chance that they were right, it was obviously his duty to

go away. He realized that though he was slipping into love for her, it was as yet no passion that prompted him to lawlessness; he liked to think that it might develop into something so tempestuous and irresistible. All the more reason, then, for making off before it should be too late. And of course, even though Dorothy did care for him now, as William and Elizabeth suggested, — and he was n't sure that they were n't making a Malvolio of him, — her feelings could n't yet be very deep or strong; she would not have more than quite bearable pangs of regret for his departure.

Anyway, he would do the right thing. He acknowledged that his brother had given him sound advice.

His strength of will was insufficient, however, to insist upon an abrupt departure. He could not deny himself the dismal pleasure of bidding Dorothy farewell. He hoped — and he knew it was unworthy of him — to draw from her some display of feeling.

When he went to see her, she had just returned from a walk in the sharp January air; her cheeks were rosy, her eyes sparkled, the cordiality of her welcome had never been more warm. Sitting in the pleasant drawing-room before the fire, while she made tea and talked in the voice that seemed to him the sweetest he had ever heard, he became more clearly aware of the appalling nature of the step that he was about to take. He was about to cut himself off from the greatest pleasure in his life, the greatest stimulus, the greatest happiness. Was it necessary that he should do this?

And because he realized just now what the sacrifice would be, he knew that it was necessary.

His unwonted gravity and silence drew a comment from Dorothy.

"Tell me about it," she urged. "Something has gone wrong."

"No; nothing." He hung back from saying the words that would commit him to his painful resolve.

"You look so glum! Not a bit like yourself."

"I don't feel much like myself, in fact I feel that pretty soon now I shall be like somebody quite different." He hesitated and then, seeming to himself in a ridiculous way quietly heroic, he remarked, "I'm going to New York to live."

That he had startled her was obvious. She held the lump of sugar suspended over her cup. "To live!"

"Yes; I've come this afternoon to say good-bye."

She looked at him with eyes no longer sparkling, but round and puzzled.

"You take me by surprise. Tell me about it."

It disappointed him that she could speak so lightly, with no accent of distress in her voice.

"I've talked it over with my brother. He feels as I do that there's probably a better chance of my succeeding if I go to New York. A better chance, perhaps, of getting into the atmosphere of the work that I'm trying to do."

She looked unconvinced, and the look drove him to add, "Of course, that's not the only reason — not the real reason."

"I see," she said after a moment. "You don't want to tell me the real reason."

The pique in her tone betrayed her innocence. And then suddenly he knew that he loved her dangerously.

"No," he said, "I won't tell you — exactly. But I should like you to know, in a way, how much help you've been to me, what you've meant to me. It has n't been just your interest and your criticism — much as I've valued them. Do you know the test that I try to apply to every woman character that I want to make an attractive character? I ask myself, 'Would Dorothy Brandon say that, take that point of view, do that thing? '"

"That's a very pleasant compliment. And now you think the time has come to introduce more variety into your heroines — study some New York models?" Dorothy's eyes twinkled; he looked at her reproachfully. But she continued, quite unmoved by his appeal, "Well, in that case I must confess you're acting wisely. But I hope you'll come back once in a while and see your friends. I'm afraid, though, you'll find us then such dowds!"

He was deeply disappointed and hurt. How mistaken William and Elizabeth had been, how gullible himself! Whether he went or stayed, he was nothing to her. He rose, trying to cover the wound to his pride, trying to believe there had been none to his heart.

Then, when he took her hand, her lips trembled, her courage failed, and she spoiled it all. "Good-bye," she murmured, and he asked in a kind of ecstasy, —

"You *are* sorry? Tell me you are sorry!"

She nodded. "Oh, of course, I knew what you meant — I was just trying to make it easier for myself — and now I've made it hard!" Tears were in her eyes. "Yes, of course, you must go. Good-bye!"

He pressed her hand and tingled to her responsive, nervous clasp. And then he was gone.

She walked restlessly back and forth in the pleasant drawing-room. Marriage — what had it done for her? It meant that the moment a man liked her and she liked him and they helped each other to be interested and happy, he must flee her as if she were the pestilence. It had never been so in the old days, before she was married. O for those vanished days! O for the vanished man!

Matrimony was an island on which, because of its seeming attractiveness, two persons thoughtlessly marooned themselves — only to find that it was a dull little spot, and that though they might signal and signal no rescuing craft would ever come.

CHAPTER XXXIII

TWIN PRETEXTS, WITH MENTION OF AN IMPORTANT INCIDENT

THE only remedy for unhappiness that Dorothy knew was the pursuit of pleasure. She had decided that the Morrisons' ball should mark the occasion of her formal reëntry into the gay world; she had persuaded her mother to issue invitations for a dinner of twenty on that evening, and to her own imagination she presented the entertainment as one of considerable significance. It was vaguely her idea that it would enable her to show George how much she deserved attention and consideration; how easily she might attract it. She was resentfully desirous of teaching him a lesson through a demonstration of her popularity; she looked forward thus to gaining for herself a double satisfaction. She wished to have George conduct himself as a lover once more, but first he should be made to woo her for that privilege. It was no part of her design to keep alive a distracting passion; she thought it was her desire to forget Sidney Hanford as soon as possible.

On the evening of the dinner and ball she stood before her pier-glass fastening her pearl ear-rings; then she surveyed the smooth lengths of pink satin in which her shapely figure was swathed. To her hair she gave a final tuck here, a final pluck there, and then she turned to her husband.

"Do I please you?" she asked.

"Please me! You frighten me. I don't dare believe that anything so splendid is mine!"

"I hope other people will forget that it is. Oh, I want to have a good time!"

"I shall have one, just looking at you."

"You can be quite sweet, can't you, George?"

They went off together happily.

The great Vasmer house was illuminated as it had not been for nearly two years. Mrs. Vasmer wore her resplendent pearls; she seemed to enjoy renewing the sumptuous hospitality of the past. Her dinners had always been characterized by rare wines, rare fruits, rare flowers; it was now the opinion of the most experienced among her guests that the long interval of quiet had produced no deterioration in the standard.

Dorothy felt more at home in the big dining-room than in her own small one, more unconstrained with this large party than facing her husband across the table all alone. She felt that she would love nothing so much as to go to a dinner every night. When at last it became time to move on to the ball, and George, after handing her into the carriage, took his seat beside her, she exclaimed, —

"Oh, George, I'm having such a good time! And I'm going to have such a good time!"

He laughed and petted her, glad to see her so shining with happiness and marveling at the kind of thing that roused in a woman delight and excitement.

But the ball proved disappointing. The men who used to flock around her did not so congregate now. Each one

of them had become absorbed in another quest, and she observed it with unimagined pangs. Hugh Shepard seemed to be always dancing with Ellen Morse, Jack Willard was noticeably devoted to Sally Duane, Alex Dunbar seemed to be pursuing a girl whose very name Dorothy had to ask — and so it went. All of these old familiar friends came up to Dorothy in the course of the evening and asked her for a dance, —Hugh Shepard came twice, — but it was not as it used to be when one would "break in" jealously upon another — when they watched one another like hawks. Now with each of them she circled, it seemed endlessly. At last, despairing, with no relief in sight, she found herself subjected to the hitherto unknown humiliation of being steered up and down the line of waiting, scrutinizing men and of being, as it were, passed upon unfavorably by them all. On each occasion it was her husband who finally relieved the partner chained to her by duty, but no longer by desire. She had not believed that being "out of things" for two years could make such a difference — that being married could make such a difference. Perhaps it was n't just that: she observed several young married women who seemed to be popular and to be having as good a time as any of the attractive young débutantes. They were nearly all women who entertained a good deal. Men would dance with people who fed them. Sitting out dances, sometimes with her husband, sometimes with elderly matrons who had come merely to look on, Dorothy indulged in bitter reflections, both about human nature and about individuals.

And while she was thus trying to comfort her lacer-

ated feelings, George had to make his tactless remark. He was waltzing with her, and as he really waltzed very well she could have enjoyed it if he had not been her husband. Suddenly he said, "Is n't it odd! Do you realize that until to-night we had never danced together in all our lives?"

"Whose fault was that?" she asked. "Why did n't you ever come and dance with me in the old days?"

"I hardly knew you. And I used to feel there was n't much of a chance to break in — you were always surrounded by men."

"It must be a satisfaction to you to see how completely you've put them to flight."

George, who had instantly regretted a comment that had implied a sense of contrast, hastened to say while he increased the pressure of his arm about her waist, —

"You can't expect me to feel sorry over such a victory, can you?"

And then because she laughed he thought it was all right. But it was n't all right, although she felt she would rather die than let George know it. She was n't going to let any one suspect her consciousness of humiliation. But George ought to have had a more sensitive perception than to make such a remark to her. And then it flashed into her mind, "Sidney Hanford would never have said such a thing." He had too subtle an insight, he would have known how a woman would feel. If Sidney Hanford were only at this ball! Then she would n't care if George never came near her, — and Sidney would n't care either, — not like those others, wriggling to get away to other girls.

Then and there she made two resolves: One, not to give Sidney Hanford up, the other, to recover her old prestige.

The next day she wrote to Sidney; she addressed him in the care of the New York magazine that had just published one of his stories; she assumed that an editor so favorably disposed would be one of the first persons to be apprised of his change of address. The story she made her first pretext for writing; it was one that he had submitted to her in manuscript, and her criticism had prompted him to make alterations. So it was natural enough for her to wish to express her approval and appreciation of the story, and it was only at the end of the letter and as if by chance that she mentioned a projected shopping trip to New York which she was taking in about ten days. And in a bantering way she asked if he would not give her an opportunity to pass upon his New York model of a heroine; in that case, perhaps, he would dine with her at her hotel and they could have a pleasant literary evening.

His reply came promptly; he would hold himself engaged to dine with her on any evening that she named. Thus the shopping trip which had originated as a pretext developed into an enterprise.

In the week that elapsed before it Dorothy was restless and excited. Her excitement, as she well knew, was only in a small degree attributable to the prospect of seeing Sidney again. The adventure, and the secrecy with which she must carry it out, the consciousness of moral guilt which yet was not serious enough to stamp her as immoral, the sense of triumph in having broken

down so easily another's praiseworthy determination, all had their part in producing the elation with which she anticipated the trip to New York.

Dorothy could always be happy when excitements of a pleasant kind were imminent. She had no far horizon on which to rest her gaze; her life had always been one of scrambling eagerly towards events in the near future. Now, cherishing her secret, she undertook with a cheerful spirit the domestic duties that had bored or irritated her; she gave the baby more care than usual and tried to persuade herself that she enjoyed it, for she did not like to feel that she was in any respect an abnormal mother. But the baby, accustomed to his nurse's handling, resented that which Dorothy bestowed on him, cried in his bath, balked at his bottle, and conducted himself in other ways with such disregard for her sensibilities that she soon resigned again the tasks that she had appropriated. She cuddled him and played with him at intervals during the day — and looked forward with some impatience to the time when he should be able to discriminate in her favor between her and a servant.

She had decided not to go to any more balls until she could be sure of a following. The endeavor to induce her mother to give a house dance proved fruitless. George wondered at the number of college youths whom he found dining informally at his table; he wondered how Dorothy got hold of them, and why. She confessed to herself an ignominy in owing recovery of social prestige to such machinations; still, at a ball a man counted for a man — so long as he was not one's husband.

The trip to New York was but the first of many. Nothing surely could have been more innocent than the evening that she spent with Sidney. The talk was almost entirely of him — his manner of life, his writing, the recognition that his work was beginning to receive; each of them was scrupulously careful to avoid any reference to the circumstances under which they had last parted. After dinner, they found a quiet and deserted little writing-room in the hotel; Sidney produced his pages of manuscript; once more Dorothy was his Egeria.

It was all so innocent and, from Dorothy's point of view so satisfactory, that at the end she said, "I come over to New York quite often. I'll let you know when I come again; I think it's pleasant to keep track of each other, don't you?"

"I hope you'll come often — and always let me know," was his answer.

Dorothy stayed over the next morning to do the shopping required if she was to distinguish scrupulously between truth and fiction. It imposed upon her the perception that her contemplated expeditions to New York would be expensive affairs. The discovery was an awkward one, for she had but recently learned how much it increases the cost of living to emerge from mourning. She consoled herself with the reflection that her mother would always give her money to go to New York and buy clothes, and with the fact that George was becoming more prosperous. And she returned to Boston really happy in the feeling that now she would have a secret all her own — a secret so little, little guilty as to be quite innocent. There was no reason why George should n't

know about it, except that it made it so much more exciting to keep him from knowing about it.

With Sidney leashed again and matters in train for a more active social career, Dorothy was reasonably contented. A succession of small excitements now enabled her to perform a series of eager scrambles, and for one who had no far horizon this constituted a tolerably satisfactory life.

Then Mrs. Vasmer fell suddenly ill; a week from the day on which pneumonia declared itself she died.

CHAPTER XXXIV

GEORGE PREPARES FOR LESSONS IN A NEW SCHOOL

SORROW for her mother's death brought Dorothy nearer to George. His tenderness and sympathy reminded her again of the sad days in London and on the steamer when he had been a comfort and a support. The qualities that had first caused her to love him revealed themselves now; it touched her now to realize how true had been his affection for her mother, how well he appreciated her quality, and how sincere was his grief. Dorothy was aware that her own attitude towards her mother had been too much that of a spoiled child; she had buffeted and banged at her without compassion, to get what she wanted; she had cajoled and instructed and badgered her, but she had always felt that in any calamity, in any crisis, she would have her mother, unfailingly and generously stanch, to uphold and direct her. That broad bosom rather than her husband's shoulder had represented to her the most enduring and unchanging love in all the world; Dorothy had never really thought of finding herself deprived of that haven and anchorage; she had relegated such an event to the dim limbo of inevitable yet unthinkable dooms.

Kind and considerate though George was at this time, appreciative of her mother's qualities though he showed himself, Dorothy felt that not he but Sidney Hanford revealed the truest insight and understanding. Sidney

had written to Dorothy upon learning of Mrs. Vasmer's death, and Dorothy wondered how merely from the two weeks' acquaintance at North East Harbor he could have made so discriminating a study of her mother's character; she loved him, in a perfectly pure, impersonal way, for writing so beautifully about her. It made Dorothy feel more certain than ever of his ability to interpret the human heart; she did not show the letter to George, for she chose to feel it was sacred to herself, this beautiful summarizing of her mother's character; she put it away in a drawer of her desk, and often took it out for its ever fresh and vivid pictures of one forever dear.

George found himself named as one of the executors of Mrs. Vasmer's estate. From his first conference with her legal adviser he returned home more troubled than elated by his discoveries. It was the nurse's afternoon out; Dorothy was putting the baby to bed, and the baby was crying.

"Do take your horrid child!" Dorothy exclaimed. "He really behaves as if he hated me!"

George laughed and hoisted the bawling infant into the air. The wails ceased; a second toss irradiated the small face with humorous delight; a third evoked a squeal of tiny laughter. The father returned his son to the mother's lap; then, when the small lips drew down in pained surprise at this betrayal, he dangled his watch for the infantile fingers to clutch, and thus standing over the child and amusing him assisted in a peaceful undressing.

"I could keep him quiet myself," Dorothy said resentfully, "if I could play with one hand while I worked

with the other. I don't know how Annie manages. He does n't cry with her."

"Never mind; he's more used to her; there's no need to be jealous of Annie."

"I'm not jealous of Annie; how absurd! But I do think that, considering what I went through for him, I might have a more appreciative child. — Stop it!" For with his hands being torn from the watch and poked into the sleeve of his nightgown little George had again begun to wail.

At last he lay quiet in his crib, and in the next room Dorothy proceeded to dress for dinner. George, who to her unexpressed annoyance thought it too great a bore to dress for dinner unless guests were coming to the house, lounged in an easy-chair and smoked a cigarette. He saw that she was in a mood which might be improved by the receipt of cheerful news; he felt that the discovery which somewhat troubled him would seem cheerful news to her.

"Dorothy," he said, "have you any idea how rich you are?"

She turned from the mirror, interested at once.

"No. I know that mother had a good deal of money of her own, besides what father left her. I suppose she had an income of forty or fifty thousand dollars."

"Mr. Wharton and I have been going over the abstract of her estate. After the bequests to friends and servants and charities are deducted, there will be between three and four million dollars' worth of property all left to you."

"George, you don't mean it!"

Somehow it made him a little sad that her eyes were as incredulously joyful as her voice.

"Yes, it's rather staggering, is n't it? I used to think that if we could have a couple of hundred thousand between us we'd be pretty well fixed. Now you'll be having pretty nearly that amount annually."

"Won't it be fine! Oh, George, are n't you glad?"

He did not answer her directly. "Your mother also left me a hundred thousand dollars. You see, she wanted to make me feel independent of your great wealth."

"Yes, I can understand how she felt. Won't it be splendid to be not just rich, but disgustingly rich! The clothes I'll wear, and the horses and carriages we'll have, and the parties I'll give!" He saw that she was more than half jesting, but she realized that her words were hardly appropriate to a state of mourning. She added more earnestly, "And the poor people we'll help! That will be best of all, won't it, George? It's because mother did so much of that sort of thing that I never suspected how rich she was."

"It may be rather small of me," George said, "but I can't help feeling sorry, Dorothy, that you're to have so much money. It cuts the ground out from under my feet. My earnings that have been necessary won't be necessary any longer—they will be positively paltry by comparison. I shall be deprived of what has been a great satisfaction."

"You'll be deprived of miserable worries," rejoined Dorothy.

George was silent; he did not wish to state what was

his real fear — that not only his earnings but he himself might become in this altered condition less necessary to Dorothy. He feared that he might find himself a mere appendage to a household. And he was apprehensive, too, of the effect of his wife's inheritance upon his professional future. There would be men only too ready now to decry him and his work; the husband of an heiress never occupied an enviable position. That he could longer be earnestly ambitious in the profession of surgery would be doubted. Opportunities that before would have been open to him would very likely now be denied him. And it would be a harder effort to keep his heart in his work; of that he was most afraid. Adjusted to maintain a proper balance with the force of gravity, the sense of financial buoyancy would have been delightful; but the balloon had been blown too big; it would pull him hither and thither, skipping and kicking, in a frantic effort to keep a foothold on the ground.

There was no immediate change in the Brandon way of living. Dorothy decided that for the summer she would go to the house at North East Harbor, and that when she came back in the autumn they would move into the Commonwealth Avenue house. George acquiesced; indeed, he felt already that in the decision of such questions acquiescence must necessarily be his part. Dorothy, in making these plans, was scrupulous to provide for him. He must have an office elsewhere than in his home — a large office, with well-equipped waiting-room, consulting-room, and operating-room. She undertook to find such a place for him, and she found it, in the next block on Marlborough Street — not five minutes'

walk from the Commonwealth Avenue house. That dwelling in its existing form did not have her approval; she put it into the hands of an architect whom George, after observing his work upon it, termed a specialist in abdominal surgery upon houses. His labors, completed during the summer, made the interior more spacious and more elegant; and a new doorway on the street level, protected by an elaborate iron grille, gave an effect of lightness, youth, and fashion to the middle-aged façade.

Dorothy made frequent trips to New York, to buy things for the house and for herself. She had decided that she would now go to New York always for clothes; a distinct note of smartness made its appearance in her mourning garments. To Hetty Mallory it was displeasing. Hetty felt that it transformed an emblem of sorrow into an advertisement of worldliness. But she uttered no criticism, and she rejoiced in George's good fortune — for to her simple soul Dorothy's fortune was George's good fortune; there was no other way of viewing it.

As for Dorothy, she was quite beyond criticism — she gave herself, so to speak, only credit marks. Because on her trips to New York she did not always see Sidney Hanford, she accounted it to herself as a merit. She had a dim feeling that they ought not to see too much of each other, and that by not seeing each other whenever they chose, they stopped on the safe side. Sometimes it occurred to her that if George should ever learn how often she and Sidney had lunched together and dined together, it would be rather awkward — not because there had been anything improper in their so doing, but

because she had always kept it a secret. So all the more it became necessary to make a secret of it — and that fact contributed to the excitement, the thrill, of the meetings.

Dr. Armazet in his blunt way asked George if he meant to keep on practicing out of pride or out of love for his work. "Out of both," George answered. "Then money won't hurt you; it may help," said the surgeon. He had already begun to treat George as an associate rather than as an assistant; now George realized that Dr. Armazet was watching him critically to see whether he should deserve to be received definitely upon such terms. He was aware of similar critical scrutiny from other surgeons with whom he came into relation; it stimulated him to closer study and harder effort. Along with this his duties as executor made heavy and irksome demands upon his time. He followed Dorothy and her doings less observantly than ever. He was usually now so preoccupied as not to be keenly aware of the attitude of people towards him; nevertheless there were occasions when it presented itself to his consciousness humorously. He could not help noticing, for instance, the increased docility and eagerness to please of the heretofore casual and indifferent servants. With the filing of the will for probate the newspapers printed a list of Mrs. Vasmer's bequests to charities and individuals, — including that of one hundred thousand dollars to her son-in-law, — and informed the public that the residue of the estate, amounting to between three and four million dollars, had been left to her daughter, Mrs. George Brandon. For some days thereafter George would have been dull,

indeed, not to notice the urbanity of the corner cabman, the graciousness of the policeman at the Boylston Street crossing, the interest that even patients, most self-centered of creatures, displayed in him. It all made him rather shy of going to his club, but when he entered it one afternoon he was at once reassured. From a group in a corner Steve Foster called out, "Hello, George! I hear that you're simply rotten with money. You can set up the drinks."

George and Dorothy were so busy in their separate ways this spring that there was not much to draw them together. Dorothy would not consider the idea of having another child — at least, not now, with all the preparations she had to make, and the necessity of moving in the autumn. Besides, she was entitled to a rest — and George did n't think she was a good mother anyway, so probably she ought not to have more children. Always a faint note of bitterness and resentment introduced itself into their discussion of this matter.

CHAPTER XXXV

GEORGE FINDS THAT IT IS EASIER TO LEARN LESSONS THAN TO TEACH THEM

DOROTHY did not like to admit to herself how much she was looking forward to the summer at North East Harbor. It was not because of the charms the place had to offer, or because she was always happier there than in Boston. During one of her trips to New York in April she had said to Sidney, "We see so little of each other the rest of the year — don't you think you could make us a visit at North East this summer?" And Sidney without any compunctions had said, "Yes."

George made plans to take his vacation in July and did not object to Dorothy's proposal that they invite Sidney to pass two weeks of that month with them. At the same time the suggestion reminded him of Hetty's warning, which he had long since forgotten. Now the memory disquieted him. A germ of suspicion got entrance to his mind. Since Hanford had moved to New York, Dorothy had not so much as mentioned his name, yet in spite of this six months' silence she was proposing a visit from him. George wondered if she had in the interval been keeping track of him, exchanging communications with him; only on that supposition did the desire to invite him seem plausible.

George did not choose to question his wife; if she had

secrets they were of course innocent. It hurt him, however, to think that there should have been any clandestine correspondence. And then he remembered that he had no evidence of this beyond the most vague circumstantial. He wondered if perhaps his own attempt to win away another man's wife had made him morbidly ready to believe that all men were philanderers and that even the best of women had a receptive ear.

It disarmed him somewhat to find that Dorothy planned to invite the Rappallo family also for July. Without any idea of the extent of Dorothy's knowledge, George was aware that she knew a good deal about his former love for Rosamond; and he had always admired the magnanimity with which she assumed and never questioned that this love was forever past. He felt that he should display a similar magnanimity in not stooping to suspicion.

When George arrived at North East Harbor, he found Rosamond and her little son Robert already there. Graham had been unable to come; legal work and town affairs combined to make a long vacation impossible for him. The little Robert was quite as strong and promising as the little George; Rosamond herself was in the most blooming health; there was a new serenity and loveliness in her eyes. Dorothy confided to George the secret that Rosamond had confided to her, — that she was going to have another baby, — and asked if there was danger of her having to undergo another desperate crisis. George thought there must always be danger. "I don't know how she does it, I'm free to admit," said Dorothy. "I could n't. I never saw a girl so changed;

she thinks of nothing but babies; she means to have one right after another, indefinitely. She used to be lively and up and coming and always good fun; now she's just placid."

Perhaps Rosamond had changed; George did not find her less attractive on that account. She seemed, if anything, simpler and kinder, more interested in the little commonplace things of life, and rather whimsical in her sense of detachment from larger issues. When she heard Dorothy complaining to George about the dullness of North East, she exclaimed, "Good gracious, Dorothy, you don't mean that you still want to do things! Why, it seems to me that the great advantage of marriage is its restfulness."

"Not to me," said Dorothy. "I'm not willing to sit and let the world go by."

"I should hate to think it might stop and wait for me," replied Rosamond. "I'm quite demoralized, I admit. I've reached the point where I get more pleasure thinking about the baby's clothes than about my own."

Indeed, she seemed always at work upon some tiny garment; George watched her flying fingers with admiration and sometimes surprised in himself desires that shamed him; remembering how he had once clasped those hands, he felt that he would like suddenly to seize them again. As often as he caught himself thus playing with the fringe of temptation he was frightened; he did not know what seeds of lawlessness might still be lurking in him. Abruptly he would take himself out of sight of those beautiful fingers, out of sound of the soft voice; he would call on Dorothy to bear him company, and

climbing with her on the mountains or sailing with her among the islands he would try to revive the spirit of comradeship which was to have been warm and vivid always and now seemed to have sunk into a torpid slumber. He was never conscious of any great success in the effort. It was as if, gazing from the summits to which they climbed, scanning the shores along which they sailed, they dwelt on sights invisible to each other. For George there were pictures of Rosamond, serene, making her pretty, useful little garments, playing with the babies, his and hers, gallantly expectant, fearlessly content. For Dorothy there were pictures, too, George was sure; sometimes he wondered what they were, and sometimes he wondered that he cared so little what they were.

When Sidney arrived, George knew instinctively where Dorothy's thoughts had been. Instead of being restless, Dorothy now was eager and vivacious; instead of being moody, she was now quietly happy. Then, in spite of the sensation that Rosamond's presence gave him, George knew that he did care very much what pictures his wife carried in her mind. Sidney, whom he had always liked, he began to regard with suspicion and hostility. He wondered how much intercourse there had been between Dorothy and Sidney, how often they wrote to each other, how many times Dorothy had seen him in New York. He was too proud to open up this subject with his wife. Often it happened that good women fell victims to absurd infatuations from which they speedily recovered. He might question Dorothy's discretion, but never her integrity, her innocence.

Sidney no longer seemed to George the frank and candid person that he remembered. George thought of the first evening that Sidney had ever passed at the little Marlborough Street house; George had been amused and touched and pleased by Sidney's undisguised, ingenuous, speechless admiration for Dorothy; it had glowed in his eyes, it had entranced his lips. Sidney's admiration was no longer so easy to read; he had gained subtlety and flexibility and did not betray himself now with a glance of the eye, much less with an adoring gaze. From his demeanor nothing could be inferred beyond the probability that he was on his guard.

George had but two days in which to make observations and draw inferences. He was unexpectedly summoned to Boston by a message from Dr. Armazet, whom an attack of rheumatism had incapacitated. Finding that his host was leaving, Sidney proposed to take his departure also, but Dorothy would not hear of it.

"You've just begun your vacation; you must n't have it spoiled. Mrs. Rappallo is staying on with me, you know, — so you need n't feel that the conventions require you to leave, — need he, George?"

"Not in the least," George replied; his predominating idea at this moment was that he must exhibit no sign of jealousy or suspicion. His voice was cordial as he added, "Don't compel me to feel, Hanford, that I've spoiled your vacation as well as my own."

"You're both of you very kind," Sidney answered. "I don't find it at all hard to be persuaded."

Dorothy assisted in speeding the preparations for her

husband's departure. She felt relieved that he was going. She had already found that his presence during Sidney's visit embarrassed and constrained her and that she did not show at her best either to her husband or to Sidney. Now she assisted almost too cheerfully in packing George's bag. He was thinking that she took small pains to disguise her feelings. Suddenly she looked up at him and said, —

"You'll come back and have a good long visit with me, won't you, George? You need the rest; you know you do. And I shall be so lonely when you're not here — especially after the others are gone," she added honestly.

"Perhaps they can be persuaded to stay all summer," he remarked. "One of them at least might not find it at all hard to be persuaded."

The dry echo of Sidney's polite speech caused Dorothy to flush.

"Of course one wants to see something of other men than one's husband," she said. "But it does n't follow that one wants to see other men all the time."

He kissed her in token of his regret for his acid speech, but she received the caress rather coldly; she wished to let him know that she had been wounded. He was not much concerned over her coolness.

In the moment of departure he was really more sorry to be saying good-bye to Rosamond than to his wife. He would soon be with Dorothy again, but there might never be another such opportunity to renew companionship with Rosamond. And this, that was to have lasted for three weeks, had been diminished to five days.

Later in the summer George returned to North East Harbor for a short visit. There were no guests in the big house; Dorothy gave him an affectionate welcome, showed a keen interest in his report of the progress of alterations on the Commonwealth Avenue house, and after the first evening relapsed into spiritless indifference. Life at North East for one in mourning was very dull — so dull that Dorothy did n't feel justified in asking any one to visit her; the baby had reached an age when he screamed if he was crossed in anything; the only choice for her seemed to lie between a vegetating existence and a consciousness of irritated nerves. She wanted to fly, she wanted to travel, she wanted to have some excitement; here she had all this money, and what was she doing with it!

George suggested that he could help her, perhaps, to put some of it to use — in hospital and dispensary work, in supplying slum babies with good milk, and training mothers — But he spoke incautiously; that which was a hobby with him, encouraged by his sister Hetty, was a peculiar irritation to his wife. She shut him off abruptly.

"I really don't feel that I care to hear a talk on mothers." Then she continued in a burst of vehemence, "Charities enough recommend themselves to me. And goodness knows I do my share by charities. But I want to have fun and excitement and influence! If only you were in public life, like Graham Rappallo, so that I could help your fortunes! If I could feel that I counted — even if it was mostly through my money!"

"Don't worry about counting; of course you count! But that's never the thing to think of."

"What is the thing to think of? It's what a woman nowadays must think of."

"If she does, she's likely to confuse self-assertion with self-expression. More women than ever before think that to assert themselves is to express themselves. That means discontent for them and unhappiness for others."

"How should a woman express herself? There's no one way for everybody."

"Yes, there is. Self-expression is the answer that one makes to the voice of duty. According to that answer you express yourself."

"Good gracious! I feel as if I had married one of the Puritan Fathers!"

Often when it suited her convenience she referred ironically to George's little homily. No, the voice of duty had not instructed her that the time had come when she should bear more children. Duty had not whispered to her that she should always have one eye on a nursemaid as competent and devoted as Annie, or that she should appropriate Annie's tasks. Sometimes she put the catchword to a more lightly humorous use. The voice of duty had informed her that when she got back to Boston she must have one of those new automobiles. She overplayed her humor; she employed the voice of duty to announce her various intentions and desires, and George grew accustomed to respond with a tired and silent smile.

After all, she was not happy; and she was less happy since the Sunday that Graham Rappallo had passed at her house. Graham and Rosamond had been absorbed

in each other like lovers all the time of his stay — quite unobservant of Dorothy and Sidney, utterly careless of Dorothy's and Sidney's observation. It was rather idiotic for two persons to be so engrossed — yet it must be pleasant, too. Dorothy knew that it would not be possible ever to forget herself with George in that way. Her whole soul was suffused with a blind, miserable pain — for she knew that with some one else, — if she had met him first and he had cared, — it might have been possible. Even now it was a matter of concern and agitation to her to wonder how much he cared. If it was very much, he had held himself well in hand, even at parting. If it was not very much, could he and she be so fatally drawn to each other? If it was not very much, could he write to her as he did, taking her into his confidence in everything except that which she most wished to know? But, after all, she knew it, without any declaration from him. He was trying to be honorable and firm and self-controlled; the thought caused her in imagination to embrace his knees. She could not break off all intercourse with him; to see him occasionally was necessary to her life — her mental and spiritual life. Oh, life that might have been so glorious, so radiant, and was so sad!

She was disappointed in herself — never a moment when she was not disappointed in herself.

And then must come her husband, with his talk about the voice of duty!

CHAPTER XXXVI

SEPARATE ROADS

THE fires of the October sunset spread fan-like in the sky above the pines. Loose clouds that a few moments before had been floating like thistledown lay immobilized in radiance and crystallized to amber. Streamers from the central glow reached higher and higher towards the translucent zenith. A late, lingering robin piped its sweet and poignant note, as if in question of the mystery of the flaming west — ever consuming, ever unconsumed.

From the veranda of her house, where she had stood looking off at the phenomenon that daily shed a glamour over her little world, Rosamond took her loitering way along the avenue to the foot of the slope. She was all in white, from canvas hat to canvas shoes; she moved, a noiseless, shining figure, across the shadowed lawn. Even with the sunset there was no autumn chill in the air, and the shrilling of the crickets in the neighboring meadow and the chunking of the frogs in the distant swamp betokened no expectancy of imminent frosts and muted instruments.

As she passed the row of young horse-chestnut trees, a whim of memory carried her back to the evening in spring six years before when she had touched their unfolding leaves and thought how like a baby's hand they were. They were not like it any more — they had

grown large and different — but that fancied resemblance had always especially endeared those trees to her, and often when she was alone and near them she would look at them with a smile. She stood for a few moments now absorbed in a tender memory of the happy emotion with which on that long past evening she had walked here and felt for the first time in her own being the stir of another life than hers. Poor little baby who had never nursed at his mother's breast, poor little mother who had been so cheated of her hope! — she thought of them with a not too tragic pity; the boy had grown as one unaware of any loss, and she had twice now known the joy of suckling a child. Yet hallowed for her beyond the others was the coming of her firstborn, sweet the memory of the awaiting, keen the feeling that he and she together had known suffering and feebleness and should be always all the more near and dear.

From behind the blue spruce at the entrance of the avenue came a rustle and a murmur. Rosamond glanced towards the tree and smiled.

"Bobby!" she called.

There was a moment of silence and hesitation; then from behind the spruce scampered two little figures in white, laughing with the doubtful glee of the caught.

"Hello, mother!" shouted Bobby.

"Hello, auntie!" shouted George.

"What are you little boys doing here? You both should be at your suppers."

"George wanted to see his daddy come, and then he was going to jump out and surprise him," said Bobby.

"And what were you doing, Bobby?"

"I was just helping George."

"Well, that was very nice of you both. But George's daddy may not come for some time, and meanwhile your suppers are waiting. Now we'll all have a race up to the house."

She let them run ahead, following always just closely enough to convince them that she was trying hard to win. She could n't help being glad that Bobby took and held the lead; she could n't help being glad that he was the stronger and stouter of the two; and yet her heart warmed to little George; he was a sensitive, appealing, delicate little boy. Soon she saw them settled at the small table in a corner of the piazza; Alexander, aged four, and David, aged two, were already soberly employed and did not permit the arrival of their breathless elders to disturb their gravity. Rosamond seated herself where she could overlook the proceedings.

"I ate a fly," Alexander presently announced.

The statement failed of producing the intended sensation, Alexander's imaginings being pretty well discounted by both his mother and his elder brother, and being as yet hardly intelligible to David.

"He was a great big fly," asserted Alexander. "He had a green back and his wings tickled my throat."

Even this authentic detail failed to elicit comment.

"He was in my soup."

The lack of interest betrayed by the continuing silence was discouraging, and after a little while Alexander began to amuse himself by blowing bubbles in his tumbler of water and making a gurgling sound. This was something that David could do, and with hilarity David

entered into competition. Soon all four were participating in a water-bubble concert, from which they occasionally took breath to squeal with laughter. At last Rosamond said, "Now it is time for little boys who have finished their supper to go to bed." There was some dissent and some hasty effort to prove that supper was still far from finished. Resistance, however, was not prolonged; the nurse appeared and led away the three little Rappallos. "George is going to stay here with me to see his father," said Rosamond. "I'll come up in a few minutes to kiss you all good-night."

George sat on a hassock by his Aunt Rose's chair, — that was what he had been taught to call her, — and leaned back so that his head rested on her lap and his face was upturned. Then she put her hand under his chin and stroked his chin and his neck; it was a soft hand that knew how to stroke without tickling. She told George a story about a boy who crawled with a sprained ankle across a burning bridge and flagged a train just in time to save it from being dashed to pieces in the ravine below, and George, who had been getting sleepy, grew so thrilled and so entranced that he hardly heard the motor-car come purring up the avenue. But at the sound of his father's voice, he bounced up from the hassock and away from the story; he raced along the veranda and launched himself into his father's arms.

He sat on his father's knee with his head on his father's shoulder and grew drowsy, until he heard Auntie Rose say that it was time for her to go up and bid her boys good-night. "And that means it's your bedtime, my son," said George's father. Then George put his lips to

his father's ear and whispered. "He wants me to help him get to bed," the elder George explained. "Of course, he does," said Rosamond, and she led the way up to the little room that was set apart as George's own. The father undressed his son, patted and stroked the smooth little body, said, "George, we'll have to build those shoulders up if we're to make a football player of you;" then, with the pang that the sight of innocence always evoked in him, he heard the kneeling child patter softly through his prayers.

He tucked the little boy into bed and bent over to kiss him. "Good-night, old man. It's good to have had this glimpse of you."

"Oh! Won't you be here in the morning, father?" The voice was disappointed, even grieved.

"I wish I could be. But I have to go home in a couple of hours. Are you getting a little homesick, George?"

There was a moment's silence. "Not if you would come every day, — and if mother would come sometimes." The hesitation told that the last words were added from a sense of loyalty.

"Mother will be getting back from New York very soon now. And then we'll have our little boy at home again."

"Father!" The soft cheek brushed the man's face caressingly, and the whisper sounded shy in his ear. "If you were here always, I'd like it better than home."

In spite of the tribute of affection to himself, George descended the stairs in a saddened mood. It was the first time that the little boy had revealed a sense of contrast between the home life of other little boys and his

own. George wondered if it could make little sons as unhappy as their fathers. Unhappier, maybe, poor little chaps. But then the time would come when they could be sent away to boarding-school; and then there would be college, and after that a new life of their own; whereas, if you were a father you just lived always until the end in a dull consciousness of your colossal misfortune and mistake.

Neither to Rosamond nor to Graham, who had arrived during the interval, did George's smile betray the depressed state of his mind. In fact, at dinner Graham quickly took him out of himself, discussing the proposed legislation to reduce the hours of labor for women and children in factories; it was a subject in which George was interested, and Graham urged him to testify at the hearing before the committee considering the bill.

"I'll look over the hospital records and see what data I can produce," George promised. "I suppose in such a matter you don't care for mere opinions."

"An opinion from you would be valuable," replied Graham. "But of course facts to strengthen it are better."

"I suppose that most of your friends and mine think that labor legislation has gone far enough. Are they beginning to look on you as a dangerous radical?"

"Well, they think they're safer with me than with the unknown who might fill my place. And I hope they feel that when I take a position I don't do it to please anybody."

"Not even me?" asked Rosamond, and Graham laughed.

"Yes, you've pushed me a little further in this factory legislation than I should otherwise have gone," he admitted. "But I did n't go so far until I'd convinced myself you were right. — Rosamond gets her views on such matters from fraternizing with the women mill-workers over at Ripton. Fraternizing does n't seem the word, does it? Sororizing — how would that do? Anyway, it's a great thing to have a wife who does research work for you."

"So in spite of family cares you've come back into the world, Rosamond?" said George. "I remember there was a time when you thought you never would — did n't want to."

"Having children makes one think after a while of other mothers and other children," said Rosamond. "Motoring so often through Ripton I came to notice and think about the mill-mothers and mill-children there. And from that I came to know some of them and get interested in them; of course the hope that I might influence Graham a little was an incentive. I don't think he approved of my interest at first. Crusading around, he called it."

"I've lived to change my mind, anyway," Graham said. "And we'll see some of our ultra-conservative friends live to change their minds — about a good many things."

Not so much a change of mind as a change of heart was needed, thought George, but he let the thought lie unexpressed lest it seem to bear a reflection on his wife. Rosamond asked presently when Dorothy would be returning from New York.

"I don't know exactly. She certainly won't be home until after 'The World's Way' has had its first performance. That is to be next Monday."

"I did n't know it had been dramatized. I liked the book."

"Yes, the novel was very successful. I believe that Hanford feels Dorothy helped him a good deal with it. She hopes great things for him in the way of financial returns from the play. He refused to have anything to do with the dramatization — was rather opposed to its being done, but yielded to Dorothy's persuasion. She feels it necessary to protect him from the consequences of his unpractical nature."

In George's voice there was a faint note of irony, tolerant but a little sad, perceptible only to Rosamond.

"Well," she said, "I am in no hurry for her to come home and take away her little boy. I only wish you would lend him to us oftener."

"I'm really afraid he wishes so, too. You would tell me, would n't you, if you found him a bother?"

"He could never be that — the nicest little boy! He and Bobby get on splendidly, and Alexander shows him as much respect as he shows to anybody — which is not saying a great deal, I must confess. And George is much more considerate of David than either of David's brothers. I'm always hoping that they will benefit by his example, but I'm afraid he's more likely to be demoralized by them."

"It's a kind of demoralization that he does n't get at home and that might do him good."

Soon after dinner George had to take his departure.

"Do come again soon," Rosamond urged. "Telephone any day. Ever since he learned you were coming this evening your son was so excited — he talked of it all day, and I had to bring him up to his supper from the gate where he was lying in ambush to greet you. The little boy is very fond of his dad."

There was no doubt about it; the way Rosamond said even such simple things, her voice and her look, went to his heart; it would always be so. He stepped into his motor-car and drove off down the avenue. Rosamond — it was his favorite among all names; it was a sweeter name than Dorothy. And he never thought of her who bore it, he never saw her, without knowing that for him she still symbolized romance, retained still all the old mystery and charm. If it was disloyal to his wife to recognize this fact, at least he saw Rosamond as seldom as possible, thought of her as little as possible; the rest was not within his control.

How happy they were, Rosamond and Graham! George thought of his mad attempt to intervene during their honeymoon — for the sake of Rosamond's happiness! She had come to love her husband, that was clear; she was a help to him in his work, there was a comradeship between them of the right sort. And they had children — not one poor, lonely, silent, fragile boy, but children who bumped one another round, shouted and laughed and wrestled, fought and kissed and lived already in one another's lives.

Dorothy was too busy to devote much time or any but the most perfunctory affection to her little boy; the child's early and unchanging preference for his father

and his nurse had turned her from him.. She had been too busy to provide him with brothers and sisters — for the enriching of his life and his father's and hers. Money had been a curse to her in that it had enabled her to pursue her small and senseless ambitions, but — and George, staring ahead along the tunnel of light that his car bored into the darkness, passed a harsh judgment on his wife — she had not deteriorated because of money; she had always been selfish, never the woman he had thought her — spoiled to the core. Money had made her defects more glaring, money had alienated husband and wife from each other as poverty would never have done; but not because of money only had George and Dorothy found that they got on best by traveling their own roads.

Dorothy's travels took her quite literally from her husband at certain seasons every year. She never had difficulty in finding congenially restless and opulent women friends to accompany her — for Lent to Palm Beach, to Europe for the spring — one season she tried California, but did not like it. Of course, she was frequently flying to New York, and every autumn she spent from two to four weeks there, preparing for the winter's gayeties.

Meanwhile George sojourned at home. Dr. Armazet had retired and had left him in possession of a large practice and in charge of a flourishing small hospital. For a man still a little under forty, George's earnings and professional standing were enviable and exceptional. It had been a source of pride to him that he had been able to earn an income in some degree commensurate with his

wife's. Since apparently they had to travel separate roads, it had made it possible for him to follow his course with a sense of independence.

Only recently had the discovery how much their paths had diverged been forced upon him. Until the seventh summer after their marriage Dorothy had not invoked her unwillingness to bear more children as an excuse for discontinuing marital relations. That she should plead it then for such an end was unreasonable; she was unwilling to occupy longer, except in name, the position of wife.

She made this known immediately after Sidney Hanford's visit to North East Harbor. Beyond a certain point George did not question her motives; it was sufficiently obvious to him now that the friendship which he had persisted in regarding as harmless had taken on a deeper significance.

George had then written to Hanford the briefest of notes: "Unwittingly, no doubt, you have come between me and my wife. Learning that this is the fact, you will, of course, discourage her infatuation by declining further opportunities to promote it."

Hanford replied, "I do not recognize that there is infatuation on either side. Therefore, I cannot consent to have a course of action dictated to me."

George pinned together a copy of his note and Hanford's reply and showed them to his wife. A flush streamed over her face as she read, and her lips curled angrily.

"A pleasant way in which to write about your wife!"

"It is because I wish to retain her as my wife that I so write," George responded gravely.

He said no more; he wrote no more; he trusted hopefully to the word "infatuation" to rankle in the young man's mind and produce disillusion. Even when she announced to him that she was going to New York and should stay for the opening night of the play founded on Hanford's novel, he made no comment, and he sent no further message to Hanford.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE NIGHT OF THE PLAY

THE trickle of people into the theater had swollen now to a stream, the body of which seemed dammed behind the rail while the overflow made rivulets down the aisles and off among the stalls. The reports of the seats as they were snapped into place were sweeter music to Dorothy's ears than that furnished by the orchestra. Sitting ten rows back on an aisle, she had been quivering with panic, hope, joy, and expectancy. How terrible if people should not come — if the actors had to play to an almost empty house! She had dined alone in her rooms at the hotel and had been too excited to eat; she had come to the theater alone, wishing to be unrestricted in the enjoyment of her sensations. She looked on the first few persons scattered about among the stalls with warm friendliness and an almost abject sense of gratitude; but as by degrees the theater filled and she noted the commonplace faces and heard fragments of commonplace chatter, she felt irritation rather than gratitude towards these people; they should have come eagerly expectant, tremulous, understanding the high importance of the occasion, aware of their privilege, even a little awed. Oh, if they should prove as stupid as they looked, most of them, and not appreciate, not respond! But the filling of the stalls, proceeding at greater and greater speed, inspirited her; after

all, there must be some intelligent people among so many — and it did n't so much matter whether they were intelligent or not, if only they were well disposed! And of course they were; most of them had no doubt read the novel and had come because they liked it.

The orchestra played lively airs, Dorothy's hands grew cold, her heart was prayerful; she glanced from the curtain to her watch, and from her watch to the curtain, and she wondered where Sidney was — that boyish prodigy with the long eyelashes! She knew, from other sources than himself, that quite against his will, yielding to entreaties from both manager and dramatizer, he had become involved in the final preparations for the production. So no doubt he was now in that magic region, behind the scenes; what was he doing, how was he looking and feeling?

She had not seen him since a day in July when he had bade her farewell on the wharf at North East Harbor; no, although she had been in New York now for three weeks, she had not seen him, had not let him know that she was in town. So much had her husband's note to Sidney accomplished. The poisonous word in it had intimidated her; she found herself dreading to do anything which might seem to Sidney to justify that word. His invitation to come to the opening performance and after it to take supper with him and a few of the company was forwarded to her from Boston, and she had accepted it without even then letting him know where she was. Now, waiting for the curtain to rise, she wondered if he would find her in the audience; she wondered if the supper would celebrate a triumph, and

she pressed her hands together and thought, "It must! It must!"

And then Sidney stood beside her; he was bending, laughing, and speaking into her ear, "Hello! I found you, for all you've hidden yourself so modestly away! Did n't you want to sit farther up front? How good you were to come!"

In his presence, under the warm excitement and persuasive softness of his voice, all her self-consciousness fled; her voice was as eager as his.

"Oh, I had to come! Nothing could have kept me away!"

They could not be unaware of the joy in each other's eyes, they could not wish the light of any other emotion to appear in their own.

"I've been wondering about you," she said, "where you were, how you were feeling — wondering if you were as excited as I. Shall you see it from somewhere in the wings?"

"No; I have a couple of seats two rows back. I wish you would come and sit with me."

"Oh!" she said, and nothing before had ever given him quite such an exquisite thrill as her breathless delight. "Are you sure you want me? Beside you — all through?"

"I'm sure — all through!"

She followed him to his seats.

"I've never been so thrilled over any play before," she said.

"Neither have I," he answered. "And yet it is n't really mine."

"All that is best in it will be yours."

"Some of the best in it will be yours."

They laughed, with half suppressed excitement.

Then with the turning down of the lights there was a hush; the curtain rose. Dorothy's heart beat so hard that she wondered if Sidney heard it. People coming in to their seats made so much noise that for a few moments the words of the play were lost; then there was quiet; then, oh blessed sound, there was a laugh, a broad, spontaneous laugh, rolling as it were up from the audience right on to the stage. Dorothy turned to Sidney. "It's going! It's taking hold!" she murmured.

"Pretty early to tell," he answered; but he was feeling wonderfully buoyant and serene. His was a happy situation; if the play was a success, he as the author of the already popular novel must enjoy the chief glory of creation; if it went badly, the burden of its failure must fall upon the dramatizing drudge. It surely was starting well. He could not help admiring and enjoying the vitality of the action that he had imagined, he could not help being more pleased with the speeches that were his than with those that the playwright had introduced. The quivering enthusiasm and excitement of the woman beside him were sweeter than the responsiveness of the crowd. As the act moved towards its end, it tightened its grasp on the audience. The climax was one of emotion rather than of comedy; a deeper hush hung over the body of the house, people were looking and listening with strained intentness. When the curtain fell, applause brought actors and actresses forth

again and again to bow their acknowledgments — all together, then one after another, then in groups and pairs, then all together again.

"Oh, are n't you proud!" Dorothy whispered.

"I hope the demonstration's genuine," Sidney answered.

"It is, of course. Can't you tell! And how proud your brother and his wife must be! I suppose they're here."

"No; illness at home — the little girl. Nothing serious, but they could n't come."

"How disappointing!" Dorothy was really thinking, "How fortunate!" She had been afraid of encountering the brother and his wife at supper; she was afraid that they would disapprove of her presence; and now her spirits soared.

"Do go behind the scenes," she urged. "They'll all be wanting to see you, and you want to see them. Do go — just for the intermission — and then bring me all the gossip."

While he was gone, Dorothy entertained herself by listening to comments on the play. They were all favorable; the prevailing opinion seemed to be that it was "sweet." Dorothy scorned the intonation with which the word was employed, but accepted the tribute. Indeed, the playwright had distilled all the magnetic human qualities of the novel — the sentiment, the humor, the tenderness. How fine the mind in which they had originated, how lovable the spirit that they reflected! And mind and spirit, were they tangible, had been at her very elbow, had almost brushed her shoulder, —

and had looked at her out of such eager and excited eyes!

Back came Sidney just before the curtain rose for the second act.

"Are n't they pleased with the way it's going?" she asked. "And oh, I hope you said nice things to them — for they're all doing it so well, all except one or two."

"Oh, yes, I said nice things even to the one or two. The manager is really quite ecstatic — predicting a whole season's run. Perhaps the next act will be a fizzle and then he'll talk of taking it off next week."

"There will be no fizzle," declared Dorothy. "I feel sure that the second and third acts are even better."

To the audience they seemed so. And when the curtain fell on the third and final act, the people, instead of hurrying from the theater, remained in their seats and applauded and applauded. Dorothy clapped furiously, everybody clapped, everybody except Sidney.

"Clap, why don't you?" cried Dorothy, turning to him with laughter brimming in her eyes. "If you don't, you'll attract suspicion to yourself."

"All right, I'll clap the actors"; and Sidney joined in the applause.

"It is n't the actors they're clapping. It's the novelist — the author of 'The World's Way' that has sold a hundred thousand copies! They want to see what you look like. They want to hear you speak."

"No," he declared vehemently. "No."

But his presence in the audience had been discovered; people were pointing him out to one another; here and

there friends of his were on their feet, clapping and smiling and nodding at him.

"Oh, you must go up and say something," Dorothy whispered.

"Well!" He spoke resignedly. "Wait for me; it won't be long."

Dorothy's heart began to pound again as it had done just before the rise of the curtain. She watched the curtain as intently as when she had known it would go up within a few seconds. Then Sidney stepped out in front of it, leading John Burton, the playwright, by the hand, and at once the dogged clamor of the audience came to its culmination in a great explosion of applause. Dorothy felt herself on the verge of tears, there was a lump in her throat, she was throbbing in the utmost luxury of joyous excitement. Sidney, with his smile and his embarrassed manner, looked appealingly boyish; more than ever in that moment she thought of him as just a boy.

And in his halting little speech there was a boyishness that still further won the crowd and seemed to make the lump swell in Dorothy's throat.

"Mr. Burton here is so overcome by this ovation that he wants me to speak for him," he said. "And I'm willing this once to do it, for it gives me the opportunity to thank him for the pleasure I've had in seeing action and characters with which I was familiar transferred to the stage and made more interesting in the process. And as for the actors, they have made my people seem actually real to me. But I don't know really that I should thank Mr. Burton for anything. The play

strikes me as so much better than the novel that it's likely to kill the novel; and as the novel is mine and the play is Mr. Burton's I think perhaps I owe him resentment rather than gratitude. And to show my resentment, I shall simply leave him here all alone, to speak for himself."

With that, he quickly slid off by the opening through which he had made his appearance; Burton, to the delight of the audience, hastily scrambled after him.

At the little supper, where Sidney was host and Burton and four members of the company were guests, Dorothy received the laurel wreath. She heard Sidney tell the others that he could never have written "The World's Way" had it not been for her help and criticism — that if it had n't been for her, Mr. Burton would have had no novel to transform so miraculously. Everybody was happy, everybody congratulated everybody else, champagne fizzed, sparkled and vanished; it was a happy, happy evening.

At last the guests took their leave. Dorothy said good-night to her host. "No, no," he answered. "Wait a moment; I'm going to take you to your hotel."

In the cab Dorothy settled herself with a sigh.

"Oh," she said, "has n't it been a glorious evening! And are n't you thrillingly happy!"

"Not really," he replied. "The evening has made me quite unhappy. Can't you guess why?"

"No." But she felt a sudden tightening of her nerves.

"Because it's made me know that you are the only woman I could ever love. For a long time I've been

hoping that it was n't so — that I might find some one else. — But I never shall. You 're the only one."

"No," she said tremulously. "No."

"Yes; it's true. — To have you by my side there to-night — what bliss it was! What is my little triumph worth! There's only one triumph, one success — to have the woman one loves."

"Oh, but you must n't feel that." Her voice was low and constrained. "A man loves more than once."

"A man proposes marriage more than once, he marries more than once, but he loves only once," Sidney replied earnestly.

She questioned the assertion in her heart, but not with her lips.

"If things had been different, could n't you have loved me?"

"If things had been different — how could I tell?"

"If things were different, could n't you love me now?"

There was no answer.

"Could n't you — Dorothy?"

He felt that she was trembling. After a moment came the words, breathed rather than spoken, "I might."

His arm slipped round her. "Oh, let me have a kiss — for the sake of our love!"

Only the stopping of the cab made them draw apart. At the hotel entrance they bade each other farewell. There under the lights their agitation was visible to each other, made each seem to the other more loving, more to be loved.

"I may see you to-morrow?"

"No." She spoke positively yet pleadingly. "No. I shall go back to Boston to-morrow. You must not try to see me. No. Good-bye."

She fled from him, into the hotel. But his kiss flamed in her heart; even more, the kiss that she had given him seemed to have carried with it her soul.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE

COMING in from Brookline, where he had been visiting a patient, George lay back in the corner of the limousine, with his eyes closed. He was tired and his head ached; and so, although it was an hour in the afternoon when he made it a rule to avoid the Commonwealth Avenue house, he was going home.

He found his wife's limousine waiting in front of the house and her chauffeur, in bearskin coat and cap, standing in well-disciplined immobility on the pavement. Receiving a military salute from each chauffeur, George passed into the vestibule. He entered the house to find Richards, the butler, ready in the hall to take his hat and coat, and as he surrendered them he wondered how Richards managed it — soft-footed, ubiquitous, urbane; he could not remember ever entering the house at any reasonable hour without finding the incomparable servitor on hand to receive hat and coat and stick and to bear them away proudly as if they were decorations.

George glanced into the drawing-room; the odor of cigarette smoke blended with other fragrances less pungent and more sweet. Wilson, the second man, was rapidly moving chairs and tables into place and glanced up in a deprecatory manner; he was one of those excellent servants who feel that unless they have succeeded in

performing their duties by stealth they have fallen short in technique.

"A party of some sort?" asked George.

Richards reappeared noiselessly to answer.

"Mrs. Brandon's Tuesday bridge, sir. We're a bit tardy, sir, in restoring order."

George ascended the stairs. His wife's dressing-room door was open; she was putting on her furs and turned from the mirror as he paused.

"Well," she said. "What brings you home at this hour?"

Mild curiosity, not annoyance, was in her tone.

"I'm feeling rather used up and I decided to knock off and rest; I think you said we were dining out to-night."

"Yes, at the Mayos'."

"That means bridge, I suppose."

"Yes. Of course, if you're not feeling well, I can telephone —"

"No, I share your principles against withdrawing at the last moment. I shall be all right after an hour's rest."

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing, thank you. You're going out?"

"Yes, to a rehearsal of the *Tableaux vivants* at Copley Hall. It's a bore, but I'm in for it."

"How did you fare with your bridge this afternoon?"

"Oh, I won thirty-five dollars. I would rather have lost. Elsie Garnett is the worst possible loser."

"You look very handsome."

"Thank you." She did not smile; she never smiled any more when he paid her such compliments. He con-

tinued to pay them in the hope that some time she would smile.

In his own room he put on a dressing-gown and lay down upon the couch. He thought he could go to sleep, but instead he lay musing disconsolately. What progress had he made in the five months that he had been following his plan for winning back his wife? By force of self-control, he had shown her invariably cheerfulness and good temper; he had never uttered one reproachful or sarcastic word; he had never by any comment or inquiry indicated distrust of her, notwithstanding her frequent trips to New York. To some extent, he had sacrificed industry and ambition in his persevering effort to regain her companionship and love. Never before since they had been married had they gone about as much together as now. George accompanied his wife to dinners and concerts and theaters and balls, assisted her in her entertaining, even condescended to what he regarded as the sordid vulgarity of sitting at cards with ladies and playing for stakes. He knew that these activities did not improve his professional standing, he knew that they were noted and commented on by other surgeons, and that it was said of him, "Another good man spoiled by too much money." He himself felt that he had not deteriorated, that if only he could regain possession of the love that he had lost he could recover quickly enough the lost prestige.

But he could find no encouraging answer to the question, "What progress?" Dorothy was not hostile; she did not treat him as if she disliked him; she was invariably pleasant in a cool and rather studied way. Be-

tween them there were never any disagreeable scenes. But all intimacy was at an end — not merely intimacy of a physical sort, but intimacy of thought and speech. She made no pretense of being interested in his pursuits — and thus far his striving to interest himself in hers had been barren of result, had met only with perfunctory acceptance, unresponsive tolerance. Neither he nor she ever mentioned Sidney Hanford to each other. George supposed that she saw Sidney whenever she went to New York; she no longer gave any reason for making these trips. George believed that Sidney did not come to Boston to see her. He believed absolutely, too, that between her and Sidney no criminal intimacy existed.

But she never permitted George to kiss her; and she locked the door of her room at night. About that George had on one occasion remonstrated. "It makes me feel as one might at being put under arrest. Is n't it enough to be in that situation without having the handcuffs applied?"

"I simply feel that it removes the possibility of argument and unpleasantness and insures my privacy," Dorothy answered.

The barrenness of a life of wedded celibacy seemed sometimes intolerable. Was it worth while to maintain it? He had been putting that question to himself with increasing frequency. If he had ever been able to detect a sign of softening in his wife, however momentary, an indication of affection, however slight, it would have inspired him with hopefulness. That quality was being drained away. With it was departing warmth of feeling

for his wife; he had begun to realize that it was merely a matter of time before his indifference to her should match her indifference to him. Why should he not terminate the miserable relationship and get what pleasure and satisfaction he could out of life? He thought a good deal about that question; pessimism and passion together tempted him. But sanity triumphed over moods; he knew that his two chief sources of pleasure and satisfaction were his work and his son. What chance of retaining these would he have if he involved himself in scandal? Besides, sentiment held more than a corner of his heart. He felt that he must live straight if he was to be a good father.

So, if he failed in his constant, patient effort, — and he was, indeed, beginning to despair of success, — it would be his duty to play a part before the world, before his household, before his child. Kindness without affection, gentleness without love, a continuous compromising of interests and ideas with no compensating intercourse of spirit — how long could a man keep it up!

George thought of the little George and answered, "For life."

And when he had thus answered the question, new strength flowed into his heart; he must n't stop trying, he must n't let Dorothy ever think that he had ceased to care for her, he must n't cease to care for her. After all, there were memories enough; dwelling on them could not fail to reawaken tenderness.

The sound of his boy's voice came to him up the stairs.

"Hello, George!" he called.

A squeal of joy was the answer.

"Dad! Oh, dad! Where are you?" There was the scamper of excited feet along the hall.

"Well, old man! What have you been up to? Your cheeks are as red as apples—and as cold as snowballs!" George snuggled the boy close to him on the couch.

"I've been skating; I skated all the way round the pond in the Public Garden, and I did n't fall down once! When will you come to see me skate, dad?"

"Perhaps to-morrow."

"It's lots more fun doing things if you're there, dad."

"And it's lots of fun for me to be there when you're doing things, old man."

"My feet felt awfully funny when I took off my skates. Do yours always feel like that when you've been skating, dad?"

"They always used to. And I remember how my stomach used to feel after I'd been skating, too."

The boy gave a chuckle of sympathetic appreciation.

"Is n't it lucky it's about your supper-time, old man? You could n't wait an extra half-hour for your supper to-night, could you?"

"I could if I knew there would be ice-cream."

George the elder laughed. "We'll come along and get you washed up, and then we'll go down and see."

He sat at the table while the little boy ate his supper. And behold, there was ice-cream!

"And you did n't have to wait for it," George said. "You're a pretty lucky fellow, it seems to me."

For the sake of argument the young George was disposed to pick flaws in his luck.

"Maybe if I'd had to wait I'd have been hungrier and then I could have eaten more."

"And then you'd have had a tummy-ache. And there would n't have been much luck about that, would there?"

After tucking the boy into bed and getting his good-night kiss, George returned to his room. It was not yet time to dress: — he drew a chair up in front of the blazing wood fire and sat in contented idleness while Wilson moved softly about behind him, laying out his clothes. Marriage had n't been such a failure when it had presented him with that boy. He could look forward along the years and see the boy developing, growing to be more and more a companion. Life would get happier as he grew older, not more sad.

Presently he heard his wife enter her room and he knew that he must not idly meditate and dream any longer. Preparation for action was required of him now — valiant action among lady-killing men.

It was after midnight when he and Dorothy returned home. They ascended the stairs silently together; in front of her door Dorothy said, "Good-night."

"Dorothy!"

The note of strained appeal in his voice arrested her, and she turned. He stood with one hand pressed against the door jamb above his head.

"Dorothy, are you never again to be my wife?"

"You know what my wishes are — what my determination is."

"You won't change?"

"I can't."

"If I don't ask now for more than a little affection — the display of it —"

"So that you can kiss me — take me in your arms?"

"Yes. I love you."

Distress was visible in her gray eyes. Her fingers plucked nervously at the pearls of her necklace. Then she exclaimed, —

"Oh, George, why don't you divorce me? I know I'm not a good wife. You'd be happier to be free of me. We should both be happier."

He grew pale.

"But I don't intend to divorce you, Dorothy. And neither do I intend to give you any grounds for divorce."

"Most men in your position would feel justified in consoling themselves with other women. I should not blame you."

"I want no other woman than my wife."

"I'm sorry, George; I'm truly sorry. I realize how deeply I've wronged you — how I am wronging you. But I can only let you recover your freedom; if you reject that —" She made a gesture of hopelessness.

"I do. My only weapons are patience and love. Good-night, my dear."

He went into his room and a moment later he heard the key turn in her door. He thought that she might have spared him that — to-night, at least.

But, indeed, this night she had locked herself in as a protection against herself even more than against him. It was the first night in a long time that he had touched her heart, and her first impulse had been to show a kinder feeling by omitting her usual precaution. Then

she felt sure that he would take it as a sign of relenting, perhaps even of surrender — and if he should come to her in the dark — She did not dare to trust herself; she locked the door.

CHAPTER XXXIX

BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD

IN the spring Dorothy decided that she would not open her house at North East Harbor. For one reason, she felt so dependent now upon motoring that she did not care to go to a place where she would be deprived of the recreation; the inhospitality of Mount Desert Island to automobiles seemed to her archaic and oppressive. Moreover, most of the friends with whom she played bridge, and exchanged elaborate entertainments had houses on the North Shore; there was more social life and gayety there than at North East, where people were given somewhat ostentatiously, as Dorothy now thought, to the cultivation of simplicity. And she felt that she must not allow any intermission in the distractions and excitements with which she endeavored to beguile her mind. Swift motion had become a necessity to her; without the daily spin in her motor-car she suffered intolerably from restlessness. She tried desperately to fortify herself against the possibility of having time in which to think about her life — whither it was tending; she must have amusement always; speed and people and dress must furnish the necessary cycle; she must arrange not merely to avoid loneliness, but to evade those quiet intimacies that bring the real self to the surface.

The reason that she gave her friends for taking a

house at Manchester was that she wanted to be near George — so that he might run down from Boston now and then for a night or for Sunday. Secretly she acknowledged another and more potent motive for thus deserting North East and taking up her abode in a more accessible spot. Now that Sidney Hanford could no longer make visits to her house, she must not remove herself to a point from which it would be difficult if not impossible to arrange frequent meetings with him.

The first kiss had not been the last. Each meeting set the two aflame. On the long journey to New York, when the train was drawing into the station, Dorothy found herself quivering, shivering with eagerness and delight; meanwhile, Sidney pacing by the gate had already her fair face before his eyes. And when the gate slid back and the passengers from the train began to stream through, Sidney, tiptoeing, swept the faces with eager gaze, and when he saw Dorothy in the distance and caught her vivid smile, thrills of feeling moved in him like wind in the grass, and he stood at the grating and thought how wrong it was that he should have to wait for her to come to him — that he could not run even those few steps forward to greet the woman he loved.

They had cast aside all discretion; they lunched together, they dined together, they drove in the Park together; and in the spring of the year they took short motor trips up the Hudson. Sidney now operated a motor-car, which was serviceable in providing them with opportunities to be alone together and unobserved. He termed his prosperity preposterous. His

novel was selling in prodigious numbers; the play founded on it was the success of the season. The new novel, for which the publisher was clamoring, was nearly finished; Sidney had read it piecemeal to Dorothy, and she was sanguine of its merit. "Is n't it absurd for me to be making so much money!" Sidney said. Dorothy felt a sort of motherly tenderness for him when he confided the amount of his earnings to her — showed such naïve and humorous delight. How funny he was to regard such sums as monumental!

"Oh, but we must n't go on like this!" she often said.

"Oh, but we can't stop! We can't stop!" he replied.

She did not always have to go to New York to see him. Sometimes their rendezvous was in Providence, sometimes in Worcester, sometimes in one of the small towns nearer Boston. Never, in the euphemistic current phrase, was there anything wrong in their conduct. Of course, the time came when Sidney urged that they run away together. She refused — but she knew that her refusal must be due chiefly to lack of courage, for she felt in that passionate moment that should he propose to make her his mistress she would not resist. Because he did not propose it she loved him with a greater humility. She felt that he was chivalrous not to tempt her weakness.

She told him that she was not the person he thought her; that if he knew her as she was he must despise her. For instance, she was not a good mother. Her little boy seemed less fond of her than of his nurse and his French governess; and certainly he had much more affection for his father than for her. It must be her fault that it was

so. She knew she did not care as she should for the child. The fact that he liked other persons better than herself had chilled her feeling for him. She had not reared him herself, she had been unwilling to submit to the trouble, and had been interested in other things; now, when she wanted to be motherly with him, she did not know how to be. Oh, Sidney did not realize it, but she was a horrid person; she must be when even her own child did not like her, and when that fact affected her attitude towards her own child. Perhaps she would have been a better mother if the child had been a girl; she understood girls better than little boys and could have taken more interest from the start — but her husband had already seized upon the boy, to mould him and develop him; had taken him out of her hands. She was n't blaming her husband; after all, it was her fault; she had n't been a good mother in the first place.

Her self-accusations merely stirred Sidney to confute them, her pathos inspired him to reassure her. He knew what a warm human person she was; he knew that under happier auspices no woman would have been a better mother. She found that she loved to be reassured and consoled by him. And to him she poured out all the thoughts that at other times she strove so hard to repress. What a useless, empty life she led! There was not one real thing in it — a daily routine of inanities. She was n't of use to her husband, to her child, to any one. "To me!" cried Sidney. And again how sweetly was she reassured and consoled! Yes, she felt, there had entered one real thing into her life — this love. He had drawn from her — she would not say inspiration, she

would not dare to dignify anything she could give with that grand word — suggestion, anyway, stimulus; and it was interchangeable; it flowed from him to her as well as from her to him.

So quickly did stolen hours steal to an end! So brief were the meetings! So long and dreary the return home! Oh, if only fate had been kind to them that day when first they met, had whispered to them the truth about themselves, how happy now they might be!

Sidney grew more urgent, more insistent. "If you can make nothing of the life you're leading, if your little boy is alienated from you and you can't reach him any more, if he's growing up to be his father's child and not yours — has duty so powerful a claim? If a mother can't influence a boy in his early years, she can never influence him; he can never really be hers. Must you go on, from a sense of duty, in a life you abhor — a life that recognizes duty in only the most trifling obligations, expresses it in the most shallow observances? Give it all up, give up riches and friends and everything; come with me."

"Oh, it's utterly impossible."

"It's not impossible to put everything you have into trust for your son. It's not impossible to sail with me to-morrow from New York. We could live in the South Seas, we could live anywhere, we could spend a year or two going round the world. Would n't it be filling your deepest duty to yourself to cast off a life that has been a failure and a futility? You ought to have children who would love you, and whom you would love."

"No. I'm not a good mother."

"You would be — you could be — in other circum-

stances. You would be a good wife — the best — in other circumstances. Don't you know what a good wife you would be to me?"

"Oh, but I might n't be. The help I am to you now — perhaps just because I'm not all yours you idealize me — and so I help you a little. And if I were all yours, you would very soon cease to idealize me. And when that happened — I'd be of use to you no longer."

"It would n't happen."

"It always does."

"I should give my whole life to proving the contrary."

She fell back on the old formula: "We must n't talk like this; we must n't have such thoughts."

But when the time came for them to part, she responded to the passion of his embrace, of his kisses.

When she arrived at Manchester that evening, she found a letter from Rosamond Rappallo, asking if she would not let little George come to Sunset Acres for a visit — a long visit. "Bobby says he wants him to stay at least a month — and so do I," she wrote. "If you would make us a visit at the same time, how delighted I should be! But I suppose there is no chance of that — such a busy person! Anyway, could n't you motor up from Manchester with little George and spend a day and a night, if more is impossible? The sooner you and he can come, the better; he may have the fun of seeing the Red and Blue armies; we are quite likely to be in the thick of the fighting."

This reference was to the mimic war operations in which troops of the regular army and the militia were

soon to be engaged. The Red army, marching from a point east of Worcester, was to try to enter Boston; the Blue army was charged with the defense of the city. Rosamond mentioned in her letter that Graham had been appointed to command a cavalry corps of the Blues.

Little George's joy and excitement when he was being prepared for the expedition were not to be restrained. He danced about the house, he jumped, he jigged on one foot; such a display of animal spirits in his mother's presence was unwonted. Then in the midst of his excitement sad news was broken to him; he came running into his mother's dressing-room, crying, "Is n't Annie going too, mother? Is n't Ma'm'selle?" At confirmation of the report that Annie and Ma'm'selle were to remain at home, all his joyousness vanished, his face clouded over. "Are n't you satisfied to go with me, George?" Dorothy asked. Oh, yes, but he knew he should have a good time at Aunt Rose's house, and so he did n't want to get homesick and have to come home. And he knew he should n't ever get homesick if Annie and Ma'm'selle were there, too.

"I count for nothing with him," Dorothy thought. "I am nothing to him — except an ogre."

She did not pass the night at Rosamond's; she stopped only for luncheon, and after it she bade her son good-bye. To do it she interrupted his play; the kiss he gave her was hasty, unemotional, cheerful, and he scampered off light-hearted.

Not so did Dorothy depart. With her it was an axiom of life that she could not love any one who did not love

her. She felt that she would love her child if only he would permit it, but his clear unconcern turned her yearning impulse to resentment. Oh, if she had only made him love her as a baby! Then he would be loving her now. But there was no sympathy or understanding between them. She did not know how to reach him, how to pet him and play with him and love him. She did not always have the desire. His nervousness annoyed her, his twitching and jumping about; she could not bear a nervous child. Yet he was hers, and she longed to have him fill the place in her heart and life that a woman's child should hold. Longing and resentment and despair — from one mood to another she passed; scorn of herself and hatred of the life she had for years been leading flung about her soul stormy clouds through which the thought of Sidney shone steadily like a star. Only in relation to him could she see herself now as a normal woman, a woman whose life might be a blessing instead of a curse.

In the little boy's absence, all the moods that the thought of the child inspired — longing, resentment, and despair — seemed rushing to some culmination; she thought she must be going insane. Five days after that on which she had bade him good-bye, she took again the long motor trip to Sunset Acres. Driving up the avenue to the house, she saw George and the two older Rappallo boys at play in the orchard. She waved to them; when she got out of the car, George came running up, his face full of apprehension and distress, and without waiting for her to speak, cried out, "Oh, mother, mother, you've not come to take me home!"

Dorothy stooped and kissed him, but in that moment affection was dead in her heart. "No, George," she said, "I've not come to take you home. Go back to your play."

To Rosamond she recounted with a laugh the manner of his greeting, and Rosamond, detecting nothing beneath the surface, laughed, too.

"They're all so excited there's no holding them," she said. "The guns have been booming all the morning over towards Wroxby. A regiment of Blues passed an hour ago; I've told the boys that we may be surrounded by the enemy before night, and that father is out fighting in defense of home and fireside, and though they know that is n't literally true, it's true enough to give them the greatest thrills they've ever had. They climb one tree after another, trying to get a glimpse of the battle."

"Of course a mere mother can't compete with any such attraction," said Dorothy.

But it made little difference what the excuse might be. The boy's behavior was entirely in keeping with his general attitude towards her. So again was his eagerness that afternoon to be done with the tiresome business of saying good-bye.

CHAPTER XL

O GLORIOUS, DECISIVE NOON!

THAT night Dorothy played bridge until a late hour; she slept until a late hour the next morning. When she awoke it was with a consciousness of some depressing occurrence; then she remembered the effect produced upon her by her little boy's greeting and farewell. A black melancholy settled upon her spirits. Her child might as well be a changeling. Soon he would be going to school, and the slight hold that she had upon his interest would be still further loosened. And then, if his father carried out his plans, little George would go away to boarding-school, and that would complete the alienation. After that they would be strangers to each other, for the rest of their lives. Oh, if she had only taken advantage of those first few, baby years! Her life in and for her child was over before it had fairly been begun. And the only child that she should ever have! Worthless, useless woman that she was!

She could not lie all day bemoaning her wretchedness. Sunshine drew her out of doors; the scents and colors of the garden were a temporary opiate. The sea, placid and blue, stretched out from the foot of her cliff, against which its bosom heaved slumberously. It was no day for sails, but little motor-boats were streaking along the shore and a canoe with barearmed paddlers dipped gracefully in the soft-rolling waves. On the beach

beyond the cliff bathers were scattered; Dorothy determined to join them.

A few strokes in the cold water had a tonic effect so far as her body was concerned. She no longer felt listless and languid. Walking up from the bath-house she decided that she must get some tennis or some golf in the afternoon; she would call up Marion Wales.

Her heart seemed to stop beating, and then it began to pound with a violence that robbed her whole body of strength and left her faint and trembling. There on the driveway at the side of the house stood Sidney's motor-car. The New York number on it identified it for her. Still faint and trembling she came out upon the driveway just as Sidney made his appearance round the corner of the house.

"Hello!" he called. "They told me you'd gone down to the beach; I was just starting out to look for you." Then, when he drew near, he said in a low, excited voice, "Take me where no one will see us — where I can talk with you."

She led him down among the rocks to a cleft in which they could be overlooked by no one, except from the sea. And now, except for boats far out, the sea was deserted. At once he had her, unresisting, in his arms.

"I had to come," he said. "I could n't endure it any longer, away from you. Yesterday at noon I left New York. I drove my motor — simply to keep mind and hands occupied. Oh, my dear, my dear, we can't go on living as we are. Come away with me to-day — now! I've come for you — I've come for you, my love!"

She felt the quivering tension of his strong arms about

her; the passionate trembling murmur of his voice in her ear drew from her all the will to resist. In its place sprang to full stature passion equal to his own.

"Yes," she said, and she gave herself up to a delicious ecstasy of weakness in that straining, quivering embrace. "Yes. I will come."

They mounted the path up from the rocks, clinging each to the other's hand, looking each into the other's face with radiant eyes. His love for her, her love for him, wiped out all sense of guilt. The serene blue sky brooded over them with its blessing; when they entered the woodland path, the thrushes in the trees strewed the leafy aisles with music of rejoicing; when they emerged into the garden, the flowers lifted up their faces to shine upon them. O glorious, decisive noon!

Sidney was ready to crank the engine of his motor at once.

"Oh, heedless Lochinvar!" She laughed. "I must be the practical one; that I see. Now, listen. You will lunch with me, and will hear that I have to go to Boston for the night, and as you are going, too, you will offer me transportation. I shall have a bag packed, and we shall take our departure in good order. Is n't that wise?"

"Yes," he said, admiring her coolness. "My one idea was to escape with you as soon as possible. It has been my one idea, driving all the way from New York."

"How did you know I would come?"

"I did n't know — but I felt you would, I hoped you would."

"And if I had n't?"

"Then I should have gone away forever. My mind was all made up. It had to be the one thing or the other. Oh, how wonderful that you should have given me happiness!"

"Oh, Sidney, it will be wonderful to be happy!"

She looked at him demurely at luncheon, talking of her summer amusements, questioning him about his writing. The last meal that she should ever eat under the solemn auspices of Richards — well, she would send him and the others substantial tokens of her kind remembrance.

After luncheon, while her maid was packing a bag, she looked about her room to be sure that she should leave behind nothing that she especially prized. On her dressing-table in a silver frame was a photograph of her little boy; Dorothy slipped the picture into the bag. She had an odd momentary feeling that she would like to take a photograph of her husband, too; after all, he had been kind to her. Then she smiled at the absurd impulse.

She had no more regret at separating herself finally and forever from her old life than has a snake at sloughing off its old skin. Later, perhaps, she might awaken to remorse, but now her mind floated in a sea of eager, exultant happiness; she saw herself flying over the world with her lover, nestling close to his side.

So, indeed, she soon was flying. She was aware that she had passed out of the gate for the last time. They were speeding along the road, facing the world together — a hostile world it would be, but what matter since they faced it together?

"I looked at the clock in the hall when I came down the stairs," she said. "It was exactly three o'clock when we began our new life."

Presently she asked, "Where are we going, Sidney?"

He gave her a laughing glance. "I'm taking the only road I know. Back to Boston. Then I thought we'd turn off and make for Worcester. We can pass the night there and get an early start for New York in the morning. And then what shall it be — Europe, Africa, South America?"

"Europe first. — Oh, Sidney, does it frighten you to think what we've done?"

"It makes me wildly happy. I feel that in the words of the song, the world is all at my feet."

"To-morrow, Sidney, do you think we shall feel it is all on our backs?"

"Shoulder to shoulder, are n't we strong enough to bear it, Dorothy?"

"Oh, yes, — when you speak like that!"

"You did n't doubt that I should speak like that?"

"I hoped you would. But it frightened me suddenly to think that coming to you in this way I bring you so little, Sidney, — and I take you from so much!"

"You bring me your help and your love; you take me from nothing that I value in this world."

"Oh, Sidney, is that true?"

"Yes, it's true. And let us not ask any more morbid questions. We've done it with open eyes and a whole heart — and we're glad, Dorothy, — we're glad."

With his free hand he gripped and held her fingers tight, and she answered to the pressure.

"Yes," she said, "we're glad."

And yet, though they spoke thus and clung to each other, each wondered what might be the other's thoughts and feared to know.

Sidney drove fast — drove truly as one fleeing. When they sped by other automobiles on the road, Dorothy dropped her head, drew the veil more thickly over her face, and felt nearly every time that in spite of her precautions she had been identified. "Why should I care?" she thought. "By to-morrow or the next day every one will know." But that impulse to duck and dodge and hide — it was hateful. How much better when flight should be an accomplished fact, and she should have that impulse no longer, but instead of it the impulse and the strength to hold her head high and defy the world!

Through Beverly and Salem and Lynn they sped, and came out upon the road across the Lynn marshes. Here upon this straight and level stretch, Sidney gave his car full speed. The sun, standing over the distant border of woods, shot with golden gleams the pools and rivulets that fluttered by; its beams glanced from the shoulders of the haycocks. The salt wind dampened Dorothy's face under her veil. Never before had she been driven so fast. The sense of peril in such wild rushing through space exhilarated her and set free from its last tether the spirit of recklessness. After all, what if anything did happen? If they were killed the next moment, it might be as well.

But they came safely to the end of the marshes and entered at a reduced speed the outlying suburbs of the

city. In a few minutes more Sidney was steering his way through mean and crowded streets.

"I don't know why," he said, "but I feel that I want to get you out of Boston as quickly as possible."

She shared his desire and drew her veil again closely over her face.

He had to stop at a garage to replenish his supply of gasoline. While they waited a newsboy passed; Dorothy called to him. With the newspaper in her hand she turned to Sidney and smiled.

"I wanted to be sure they have n't got the news about us yet," she said.

Sidney laughed. "They could n't possibly have it."

She opened the newspaper and the next moment gave a low exclamation of pain.

"Oh, Sidney! How frightful!"

He looked over her shoulder, incredulous.

"No, nothing about us. Graham Rappallo — Rosamond's husband — his horse rolled on him; he's dying."

The gasoline tank was filled, the man cranked the engine, but Sidney waited to let Dorothy read on. In a moment she passed the newspaper to him.

It had been the one serious casualty of the early morning battle between the Reds and the Blues. Leading a cavalry charge Graham had spurred his horse to a reckless jump over a wall, where the ground fell away on the farther side; alighting, the animal had stumbled and fallen, crushing his rider beneath him. Graham had been taken unconscious to his house near by; his skull was fractured, and he had other injuries of which the full seriousness was as yet undetermined.

"Too bad." Sidney returned the newspaper to Dorothy and threw in the clutch; they moved on. "I remember his wife; you know I met her the day that I first saw you, Dorothy."

She was silent; tears came suddenly to her eyes.

"My little boy is there," she said at last. "Oh, Sidney, I must go to Rosamond."

"Now!" Remonstrance more than question was in his voice.

"Oh, yes, Sidney, now. If you knew how Rosamond came to me in London when my father died —! She may need me, she may want me — and with my little boy there! Anyway, I must go to her now, Sidney."

They had turned into Commonwealth Avenue; Sidney stopped his car. They looked at each other with distress in their eyes.

"How can I let you go, Dorothy!"

"How can I stay away! And how could I go off now with you, Sidney, and be happy — thinking of Rosamond!"

"Surely you can do no good by going to her!"

"Perhaps not, and yet I must go."

"Dorothy, dearest, don't you love me still?"

"Oh, yes, Sidney, I do love you. But don't you see that I must go?"

"I will take you wherever you say. Only tell me again that you love me."

"I love you."

"And this — this interruption is n't going to make any difference — any real difference?"

"Oh, no. It's only a postponement, Sidney."

"Yes, only a postponement. Let it be a short one — oh, such a short one!"

"And now we must go on. I will tell you the road."

He drove now at reduced speed while he urged her to make plans. If she found she could be of no service, of no comfort, what should she do? Would n't she simply take the child back to Manchester — and then embark immediately upon a second flight? He would meet her in Boston or wherever she should determine.

"Oh, no," she said. "I can make no plans. If Graham is dying,—I could n't go away. I should have to stay and try to be of help to Rosamond. No, Sidney, we can make no plans now. We must be content to wait."

"I could wait contentedly," said Sidney, "but I am afraid now that you will never come."

The foreboding in his voice oppressed her.

"Why should I not?" she asked.

But in spite of her brave question, into her, too, the spirit of foreboding had entered.

Silence fell; they came out into the country again. At last Sidney spoke. "I shall wait in Boston for word from you — no, I shall wait in Boston for *you*. Write to me at the Touraine. I shall wait, whether it's days or weeks or months."

"I will write," she answered in her low voice. "I will write to you soon."

They came to a lonely bit of road, with neither houses nor travelers in sight. Sidney stopped the automobile, clasped Dorothy in his arms and kissed her, murmuring, "Oh, my own! Forever my own! Oh, remember, dearest, nothing can ever part us!"

She begged him to cease. "Some one may come."

"But kiss me, dearest, — one kiss."

He reproached her for a lack of warmth in it when it was bestowed.

"Oh, I can't help it, Sidney." Her voice broke. "I am thinking of Rosamond."

He bowed his head. "I'm selfish. Try to forgive me."

Arriving at the top of a hill, they came suddenly upon a view of an armed encampment — tents pitched in meadows, soldiers drilling, and sentries posted by the roadside. These halted the automobile. "No passing through the lines," said one of the khaki-clad young men.

Sidney glanced at the blue band on his hat.

"This lady is a friend of Mrs. Rappallo's. Mr. Rappallo was dangerously hurt this morning, as you probably know. She must go to her at once."

"Then I think it can be arranged."

The sentry accompanied them to the camp headquarters where, after making a brief explanation, they obtained a pass from the commanding officer. As they proceeded on their way the sound of cannonading came to their ears, and just before reaching the Rappallo place they encountered another outpost of the Blues. Sidney displayed the pass and sped on.

He drove through the gateway of Sunset Acres and up the avenue. He stopped his car, caught Dorothy's hand, and said, "Don't keep me waiting — write to me — come to me soon!"

Dorothy pressed his hand and stepped from the car.

Her husband stood on the piazza before her. In the sudden shock of the encounter she turned white and faint. "George!" she said, and could say no more; he met her on the steps, took her hand, and glanced beyond her at Sidney. With a bitter sense of shame and defeat, Sidney pulled the lever; as he made the turn round the circle of grass he saw George Brandon with his arm about Dorothy helping her to mount the steps.

CHAPTER XLI

THE WHEEL HAS COME FULL CIRCLE

"I DID N'T know you were here, George."

Dorothy, taking off her veil in the hall, struggled to regain self-control.

"Rosamond telephoned for me at six this morning. I have been here ever since."

"Will he die?" she whispered.

"I don't know. I had to trepan; it's very serious."

"Poor Rosamond!"

"She's brave — one of the bravest. But I'm glad you've come; I think you can help her."

"I felt I must, at least, come and take George away —"

"You might take away the other children, too, if she will consent. The less excitement in and about the house now the better. If we can get through to-night, with these damnable guns going off —"

Rosamond came down the stairs, and Dorothy went to her with outstretched arms.

George left them alone together; they sat side by side on a sofa, clinging to each other, talking in low voices, now and then brushing away tears.

"I felt I must hurry to you, Rosamond," Dorothy said. "I wanted to help in any way I could — and I did n't want to let my child be a burden to you for an-

other minute. Would n't it truly be more comfortable for you if I took him away to-night?"

"Oh, no, Dorothy; stay with me to-night!" Rosamond entreated. "Stay with me, do."

So Dorothy stayed; she shared Rosamond's bed and during much of the night held her in her arms. Early in the evening the sound of the guns ceased; presently detachments of infantry hurried by along the road in the moonlight, and a field battery rumbled past. After that there was peace and quiet out of doors. Not until the dawn was the sound of the guns again heard, and then it was faint and distant; the Blues had been in retreat all night, the Reds had advanced several miles to a new position of attack.

But the stillness of the night only emphasized by contrast the uneasy activities, the disquieting noises within. Nurses tiptoeing through the halls, movements of persons in another room, the delirious babble that rose often to a shout — Rosamond's closed door did not bar these sounds. When the delirium was at its worst, Dorothy clasped Rosamond more tightly, held her hands, and did not speak. Rosamond lay trembling, silent. At last quiet fell upon the house. Then Rosamond clutched Dorothy's arm and said, "Oh, Dorothy, you don't suppose he's died?"

"No, Rosamond, dear, no. I will see George and tell you what he says."

In her dressing-gown and slippers she moved along the hall and entered George's room. He was lying on the bed fully dressed; he was awake. In reply to her question he said, "Graham is sleeping now. His pulse is

stronger. Tell Rosamond she can feel hopeful; let her go to sleep."

Dorothy returned with the message.

"Oh, I will try," said Rosamond. "Thank you, Dorothy, dear." She added after a moment, "If I were only like the boys! Poor little chaps, they've been so frightened all day; they've cried so hard. But when they had said their prayers to-night, they were sure all would be well; they closed their eyes happily."

"All *will* be well," said Dorothy.

And presently she knew that Rosamond was asleep.

In the stillness and darkness, Dorothy's imagination became active; it presented her husband, grave and intent, bending with his knife over the wounded head; so vivid was the picture that she clenched her hands and compressed her lips. It faded and left her feeling awe of her husband, and pride in him, and sorrow for him; if only he had Sidney's hair and voice and eyes, Sidney's charm and Sidney's smile, Sidney's confiding, winning nature, — if only Sidney and he were one! Could n't they, somehow, fuse into one person and be her husband, — could n't they — would n't they —?

She was awakened by sunshine to the singing of the meadow-larks.

Graham's condition was still precarious. He had waked from sleep, not to delirium, but to a clouded mind. "That's to be expected for a time," George said to Rosamond. "He's holding his own anyway, and I hope that soon there may be some positive gain." But to Dorothy he admitted that his dread for Graham was of something worse than death.

"Oh, no!" cried Dorothy in anguish.

"I hope not," George said. "In such a case it's impossible to predict. I hope not."

Rosamond parted with her children willingly when George told her it would be to the advantage of the patient to have them out of the house for a time. She was grateful to Dorothy for offering to take them, sorry to let Dorothy go. "But you've helped me through my worst time, Dorothy," she said. "I shall be braver now."

Bobby and Alexander were not in the least surprised to hear that their father was better; they and David, too, were thrilled with excitement at being got ready for a visit with Aunt Dorothy. Little George also was excited and went jumping and hopping about, not at all reluctant to be returning home in such company.

"I will telephone you every day about the children," Dorothy said to Rosamond. "And, oh, I hope I shall hear nothing but good news of Graham."

The two women kissed and parted; Rosamond's hazel eyes, Dorothy's gray eyes were alike shining with tears.

Passing through Boston with the four children, Dorothy thought of Sidney, waiting at the Touraine for news of her. She thought of him with no desire to telephone to him, to hear his voice, or to see him. The emotional stress of the last twenty-four hours had worn upon her; she was tired: and she felt the responsibilities with which she had charged herself. But she supposed that soon the need of Sidney's love, of Sidney's companionship, would reënter her life. Her listlessness and distaste at the thought showed her how tired she was.

She tried earnestly in the days that followed to fill a mother's place to the four children. She submitted humbly to be taught how to play the games that Rosamond played with them. And taking part in the games, and watching the children at play, she came to have a better appreciation, a better understanding of her own little boy. He was quick, he had spirit, he was affectionately responsive when she entered into his imaginative games. And each night she went from one bed to another, hearing each little soul say his prayers — hearing each small Rappallo end his petition thus: "And, God, please make my daddy well and strong again"; hearing her own small George echo the appeal: "And, God, please make Bobby's daddy well and strong again."

Over the telephone Rosamond's voice sounded now disheartened, now hopeful. After the first three days she had ceased to fear for Graham's life, but it was plain that the other dread had entered her heart. George, however, to whom Dorothy telephoned daily, thought that the outlook was growing more favorable, that Graham's mental condition showed steady improvement. He admitted apprehension lest the improvement might continue merely to a certain point and then cease.

Anyway, the children played untroubled and undoubting. Dorothy sat on the beach one morning while near by they were busily employed in their several enterprises. Bobby and George were building a sand fort; Alexander was experimenting with some bits of driftwood, interested to discover that as often as they were launched the sea persisted in returning them to the sand; David pattered about collecting shells and bring-

ing them to Dorothy. Presently, down near the edge of the water, he stepped on a sharp one that cut his little bare foot and caused him to set up a wail. Bobby sprang from his fort-building and ran to comfort him; he put his arm round David and led him sobbing to Dorothy.

"It won't hurt him long, will it, Aunt Dorothy?" Bobby said earnestly, while David held up his pink toes for inspection.

"No, only a moment," Dorothy answered, and she wiped the little foot with her handkerchief and held it soothingly.

David with a contented sigh dropped down and put his head on her lap; Bobby stooped and patted his brother's cheek, and then went back to his play. Suddenly another little figure plumped on the sand beside Dorothy, another curly head was burrowing in her lap; it was her own little son. She stroked the two heads and caressed the soft necks, and soon both little boys were asleep.

Dorothy sat very still in order not to disturb them, and while she sat thus, listening to their soft breathing, hearing the gentle intermittent sounds of the activities of the other two boys, there seemed to be a new birth of tenderness in her heart. She thought of Bobby running to David's aid, and felt she would like to see her own little boy so run to help a younger brother; she felt, too, that little George would always respond to such a call with eagerness and affection — that perhaps some vague craving of his heart had sent him to her now to snuggle his head in her lap along with David's. Perhaps

a boy who never had a brother or a sister was likely to grow up without developing to the full possibilities of his nature, perhaps some of his best qualities would be stunted and starved through no fault of his own; perhaps even his capacity for usefulness as a man might be dwarfed by the lonely egotism enforced upon him in childhood. She tried to look ahead along the years — her son's years, not her own. The letter that she had received that morning from Sidney stirred now no ardent thoughts.

She wrote to him: "The course that I should have pursued from a sense of duty is mine now by inclination. I cannot explain to you how this has come about; indeed, I hardly know. But what I have found is that my little boy means more to me than you do. Perhaps I shall yet find that my husband means more to me than you do. I hope it may be so. But even if it should be otherwise, our intercourse, Sidney, is forever at an end. Please do not reply to this letter; do not try to persuade me or dissuade me. I have thought much since we parted; passion can never again absorb my whole life. Whatever interest we may henceforth take in each other must be from afar. And I sincerely hope that it will be a waning interest, on both sides."

She dispatched her letter and when days passed concluded, with a disappointment deeper than pique, that Sidney had accepted her decision philosophically. He obeyed her wishes; he sent her no reply.

It was two weeks before Dorothy saw George again. Meanwhile she had received both from him and from Rosamond steadily favorable reports of Graham's pro-

gress. Not, however, until George announced the fact to her upon his arrival one Sunday at Manchester, did she know that Graham's complete recovery was assured.

That Sunday afternoon, a golden September afternoon, she led her husband through the garden, along the woodland path, down the rocks to the cleft in which she and Sidney had made their passionate vows.

"Sit down here, George," she said. "I want to talk to you."

The glance that he gave her was apprehensive and appealing; it produced in her a sudden warmth of sympathy. He looked away, out at sea, and waited for her to begin. Whitecaps were breaking on the waves far out, the sails of the pleasure craft filled to the brisk southerly breeze and shone in the sun.

"George," she said, "you never made any comment — asked any questions — about my arriving at Rosamond's that night with Sidney."

"No," he answered.

"You have n't made any comment — asked any questions — about my relations with Sidney for a long time."

"No."

"Of course you suspected that I went to New York to see him — that we met often."

"Yes. I suspected it."

Her head drooped. "I — I'm afraid that you suspected worse than that."

She saw the knuckles show white on his clasped hands.

"No. Never."

"It was mere chance that saved me, George."

He looked at her, speechless, eagerly questioning.

"I felt I loved him. He came for me here at this place. And I agreed to go with him — to go away with him forever — that afternoon. But when we reached Boston I read of Graham's accident. And then I could n't go on. I made Sidney take me to Rosamond's. I told him it was only a postponement. But it was n't that, George. I've had a change of heart. I wrote to him that I would never see him again."

She was glad that her husband suddenly reached out and clasped her in his arms — pressed her close and kissed her, murmuring words of love. She felt no such delicious thrill as when Sidney had embraced her, here in this place, — she should never feel that again, — but she was moved by George's emotion, touched by his joy and his tenderness. And it comforted her to think that giving herself thus to her husband's arms she was atoning in some measure for the illicit passion which in this spot had reached its culmination. Henceforth the place would not be one of wholly sinister significance.

Sitting there with her husband, she tried to exonerate Sidney.

"Oh, my dear, no one has less cause to judge Sidney harshly than I! My most shameful memory is of my attempt to urge a woman to desert her husband and come to me."

"Rosamond," said Dorothy, after a pause. "And it must have been on her honeymoon!"

"Yes. I thought she and Graham did n't love each other — and I did love her. That's over and done with

for me, Dorothy, — long since; I hope that your love for Sidney will be over and done with likewise in time."

"I will do what I can," she answered in a low voice. "I — I never dreamed of any such similar thing in your life, George."

"I have felt all through this experience of ours that I was being justly punished," he said. "But I think truly we have both of us been punished enough."

"Oh, yes!" she cried. And then with a sudden rush of feeling, while her head rested on his breast, she said, "George, I want to show you that I can be a good mother! I've changed — truly I have! Often now I wish that George had a little brother or a little sister! Oh, George, I do want to have children, and rear them as all mine."

The serene blue sky brooded over them with its blessing; when they entered the woodland path, the thrushes in the trees strewed the leafy aisles with music of rejoicing; when they emerged into the garden, the flowers lifted up their faces to shine upon them; for many of the plants the seed-time had come. O glorious, decisive afternoon!

THE END

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